

PRINCIPALS WHO EXCEED DISTRICT STANDARDS:  
IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH  
EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

A phenomenological study was conducted to investigate the experiences of school principals, who exceeded district standards on standardized performance evaluations, in providing effective educational programs for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD) in an urban setting. The aim of this study was to identify common experiences, practices, or attitudes regarding students with EBD, and their teachers, among school principals who qualified for the study. Data was be collected through principal interviews. Data results were coded, organized, and analyzed using a systematic method of phenomenological analysis to find general themes that speak to the essence of the experience.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 requires that all students receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Guidelines set forth by this piece of legislation support the legal mandate that students with disabilities will demonstrate measurable success in classrooms across America. With measures in place to enhance student performance, it is troubling that some students still struggle to show academic or behavioral improvement. Underachievement in those areas is a reality for many students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBD). Many students with EBD are educated in program settings that do not maximize their potential as learners, and do not emphasize academic or behavioral progress. Many students with EBD are in classroom settings with teachers who are overwhelmed, facing occupational stress, or feeling a lack of administrative support (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995). Administrative support is an important component of education for teachers and students with EBD; teachers who positively regard their relationships with school administrators are more likely to be highly satisfied and committed to their profession, and less likely to experience occupational stress than teachers who do not have positive relationships with administrators (Pullis, 1992).

There are principals who embrace their students with EBD, and place teachers for this disability category in high regard; effective principals who have established high-quality educational standards and programming for students with EBD. These principals support teachers of students with EBD, alleviating job stresses and feelings of frustration (Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001; Pullis, 1992). Some principals focus on positive outcomes for students with EBD, offering support whenever necessary to ensure success. From the

perspective of school principals, this study will examine the educational programming of students with EBD, the role of the classroom teacher for students with EBD, and effective supports that may lead to academic and behavioral success for students with EBD.

### Background of the Problem

Students with EBD have typically shown academic and behavioral deficits in school placements nationwide. Academically, students with EBD are often severely deficient across multiple content areas (Lane, 2007). Behaviorally, students with EBD are more likely to experience punitive measures for problematic behavior, such as school suspension or expulsion, when compared to their peers without EBD (Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, & Young, 2008). Students with EBD were found to drop out of school at a higher rate (51%) than students in other disability categories (Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, Young, 2008; Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004). The unfavorable outcomes are not only limited to the school setting. Research has shown that students with EBD experience high rates of incarceration (Davis, 2002). Without effective academic and psycho-social support, students with EBD are likely to experience academic, social, or behavioral difficulty (Mathur, 2007).

Teachers of students with EBD also face a host of challenges when addressing the issues inherent with educational practice and policy in this field. Teachers of students with EBD face high levels of occupational stress. This stress comes, in large part, from feeling overwhelmed with excessive paperwork, and feeling a lack of administrative support for programs for students with EBD (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995). Also, the school behavior of students with EBD can be a source of occupational stress for teachers who work in this disability category. A result of occupational stress and general unsatisfied feelings among teachers of

students with EBD is a high rate of teacher turnover, attrition, and burnout (Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001).

The role of the school principal is a pivotal one for facilitating the school-based success for students with EBD. High rates of teacher attrition and turnover are problematic because they can reduce the quality of instruction and continuity of programmatic procedures (Connelly & Graham, 2009). As school leaders, principals guide the outcomes and success for all students. In the field of emotional and behavioral disabilities, the principal can inspire teachers to overcome obstacles that often lead to unsatisfied job expectations, and make meaningful changes whenever necessary to ensure that students with EBD are maximizing their academic and behavioral potential (Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001).

The impact of a principal on a school is directly related to student performance. In the large urban school district where this study took place, schools are held accountable for their performance based on the performance of their students, e.g., the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, School Grade (Florida Department of Education, 2004). School performance is triangulated among the principal, teacher, and the students. Foremost among these participants is the principal, as the leader of the school.

According to Yukl (2002), three specific relations-oriented behaviors, supporting, developing, and recognizing, are relevant to effective leadership. Of the three behaviors, supportive leadership is especially relevant for the success of practices and programs for students with EBD. Supportive behavior reduces the amount of stress in the job, yields higher job satisfaction and is less likely to result in teacher attrition (Yukl, 2002). Therefore, identification of effective principals is key to identifying successful programs.

Graseck (2005) describes the basis of effective leadership by acknowledging the difficulties in the teaching profession. These difficulties are exacerbated by the reality that a teacher's job entails much more than classroom instruction. Teachers, according to Graseck, "yearn for support" (p.375), and "need supportive managers" (p.377). Effective administrators are those who realize this, and also acknowledge that they are a catalyst for teacher happiness, which contributes to a more desirable learning environment; one that can enhance student success (Graseck, 2005).

#### Statement of the Problem

From the perspectives of select school principals, this study examined the educational practices and improvements that have been successful in educating students with EBD. While various academic and behavioral interventions have been used successfully with students with EBD, research has not tied their success specifically to effective leadership. Meeting the individual needs of these students as stated in their Individualized Education Plans (IEP) involves focusing on Functional Assessments of Behavior (FAB), or Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP) by school administrators and classroom teachers. School settings have used data-informed instruction, research-based educational practices, and progress monitoring with communication to enhance academic and behavioral achievement of students with EBD (Vannest, Temple-Harvey, & Mason, 2009). Efforts to improve the quality of education for students with EBD often rely on the classroom teacher to execute whatever educational programs are put in place by school districts or administrators. Programmatic success, therefore, is directly related to teacher success.

Teachers of students with EBD often feel a lack of administrative support and are overwhelmed by excessive paperwork, all of which can lead to occupational stress (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995). Also, teachers experience job stress from firsthand experience with the behavior of students with EBD, often resulting in teacher attrition (Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001). Especially high rates of teacher attrition can be problematic for student success, reducing quality of instruction, as well as providing fewer opportunities for school and program growth and improvement. Teacher attrition can result in replacement of qualified special education teachers with unqualified ones, thereby reducing quality of instruction and educational opportunities that can take place in the classroom (Connely & Graham, 2009). Principals who work in urban areas are familiar with the high attrition that occurs with teachers in the special education field. Teacher attrition in urban schools can be traced to the feelings expressed by the teachers in those schools.

The negative feelings often expressed by teachers of students with EBD can be improved through collaboration and support from school principals and other building administrators (Pullis, 1992). Teacher retention can be improved by school principals who place value on the quality of the special education programs at their schools (Carpenter & Dyal, 2001). Teachers of students with EBD who have positive relationships with their school principals are more likely to remain committed to their jobs (Pullis, 1992).

The issues explored in this research are as follows:

- (a) What school principals are doing to ensure academic and behavioral success for students with EBD.

- (b) What school principals are doing to support teachers of students with EBD, and how their leadership affects feelings of occupational stress.
- (c) As catalysts for the success or failure of school-based interventions and instruction for students with EBD, what school principals are doing to achieve desired outcomes for students while contributing to a positive school climate for all.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore effective administrative practices which supported teachers working with students with EBD, and which also led to the academic and behavioral success of students with EBD. Research has shown that promoting effective educational practices and/or programs for students with EBD in an urban setting can be particularly challenging to principals. This study identified common experiences, practices, and attitudes that have led to academic and/or behavioral success for students in this population.

### Research Questions

The following questions were the basis for the research in this qualitative study:

1. How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?
2. How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?
3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:
  - a. Allotment of budgetary resources

b. Disciplinary assistance

These questions were answered through the description of the principals' experiences in facilitating educational programming for students with EBD. The principals used firsthand knowledge of referral rates, suspension data, programmatic data, or academic benchmark assessment and other standardized assessment data to support their assertions. Information regarding teacher support was referenced from direct accounts of interactions with teachers. Principals described what happens in their schools to measure progress for students and programs for students with EBD, and how the data they have collected has supported academic and behavioral growth.

### Significance of the Study

This study presented perspectives of a select group of principals on matters involving students with EBD, their school-based programs, and their teachers, who provide classroom instruction. A school principal can be the catalyst for ensuring a positive teaching and learning environment for students with EBD, and their teachers (Pullis, 1992). It is important that school principals realize that they play a pivotal role in ensuring that students with EBD are properly served in school settings. The principals' experiences and insights were summarized and combined, and commonalities that have led to success for students with EBD were identified.

Studies show that students with EBD often have deficits in academic performance (Lane, 2007), and behavioral outcomes (Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, & Young, 2008) that lead to a negative school experience. Identifying effective practices, programs, and changes implemented by school principals who met the qualifications for this study is helpful for other

school administrators who want to improve the quality of services provided for their students with EBD.

#### Definition of Terms

*Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)*: A document that targets the function of specific problematic behaviors, identifies acceptable replacement behaviors, outlines instructional routines necessary to promote the desired behavior, arranges contingencies to ensure that the appropriate replacement behavior provides the desired function, and outlines monitoring and evaluation procedures in the identified context (Scott, Anderson, & Spaulding, 2008).

*Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD)*: Also referred to as an “Emotional Disturbance”. The IDEIA definition of an emotional disturbance is as follows:

“Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- a. An inability 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.
- e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.” (USDOE, 2009).



*Functional Assessment of Behavior (FAB):* Also called a functional behavioral assessment. A formal document used to identify the motives and antecedents that prompt a specific behavior. A FAB also indicates the maintaining consequences for that behavior, and the conditions when it is most likely to occur (Lane, Kalbert, & Shepcaro, 2009).

*Inclusion:* Educating students with disabilities in general education classroom settings (Hehir, 2006, p.65). This concept supports the IDEIA requirement that students are educated in the least restrictive environment (LaPrairie, Johnson, Rice, Adams, & Higgins, 2010).

*Individualized Education Plan (IEP):* A formal document constructed for all students who qualify for special education services, which includes the following: educational needs with measurable goals and objectives, present levels of performance, how the disability impacts access to the general education setting, related and supplemental supports required, program and instructional accommodations needed, and the extent to which the student will have access to the general education setting. Also may include transition support for older students who are preparing to exit the school setting. This document is reviewed annually (LaPrairie, Johnson, Rice, Adams, & Higgins, 2010).

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA):* Federal law that mandates a free and appropriate education for all students, regardless of the presence of a disability, no matter the nature or severity. This law includes access for all students, non-discriminatory evaluation, individualized education plans, least restrictive environment for services, parent and student participation, and due process (LaPrairie, Johnson, Rice, Adams, & Higgins, 2010).

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)*: Students with disabilities have access to instruction in the general education setting as much as is deemed appropriate (LaPrairie, Johnson, Rice, Adams, & Higgins, 2010).

*Managerial Exempt personnel Performance Management Assessment (FM-7037, 2010)*: In the large urban school district used in this study, school administrators are evaluated three times during the school using criteria outlined on the “Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators” assessment tool. A principal’s performance is evaluated by a school region director based on the following eight competencies: vision, strategic and ethical decision making, accountability and assessment, knowledge management and innovation, managing the environment, human resources, interpersonal relationships, and community and stakeholder partnerships. Based upon these eight competencies, Principals are given a numerical score that corresponds to an overall evaluative distinction. Principals who score 86 or more points on this assessment are considered to *Exceed Standards* (FM-7037, 2010) (see Appendix D).

### Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. It was assumed that the participating principals provided honest and complete accounts of their experiences and perceptions of students with EBD and teachers of students with EBD.
2. It was assumed that the region administrators who helped identify principals as “exceeds standards” made this distinction ethically, honestly, and with data support.

## Limitations

The following were limitations of this study:

1. The sample size (Principals) could not generate all of the effective practices used within this large school district.
2. The population was determined by the number of principals found to exceed or substantially exceed standards based upon their annual evaluation, had programs for students with EBD for at least three years of their tenure as a school principal, have been nominated to participate by a region administrator, and were willing to participate in this study.
3. Identifying principals as “exceeds standards” was subject to the bias of the region administrators and other measures that helped make this identification.
4. This study was limited to principals who currently work in secondary schools, including middle- and high-schools in school Regions III, IV, and V in one large urban school district.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This review of related literature supports effective educational programming for students with EBD by providing a foundational knowledge base on the school experiences of students with EBD, teachers of students with EBD, and administrative practices regarding students with EBD.

### **Students with EBD**

With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2007, the definition of an emotional disturbance is clearly specified. For the purposes of this study, the terms “Emotional Disturbance” and “Emotional and Behavioral Disability” (EBD) share the same definition. The IDEIA definition of an emotional disturbance is as follows:

“Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- a. An inability 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.
- e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or

school problems.” (USDOE, 2009).

While a clear definition may be useful as a tool to identify students with EBD, it does little to guide treatment for students with the condition. The variety of behaviors demonstrated by students with EBD continues to challenge teachers with regards to instructional programming. Some behaviors that would qualify a person as having EBD under the current definition may be internalized, such as depression; other behaviors could be externalized, such as physical aggression. Each specific case, based upon specific behaviors, would garner different types of interventions and educational approaches for each student (Mathur, 2007).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, there were 483,415 school age students receiving services for EBD under IDEIA in 2004. This number accounts for about 0.7% of the total student population in America (USDOE, 2007).

Students with EBD frequently encounter problems with social, personal, and educational issues, and therefore often exhibit undesired outcomes in and out of school. When compared to their peers without disabilities, students with EBD are often moderately to severely academically deficient across multiple content areas (Lane, 2007). Students with EBD are more likely to repeat a grade, and more likely to be suspended or expelled than their peers in the general population. About 73% of secondary school children with EBD have experienced school suspension or expulsion, compared to about 22% of students in the general population (Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, & Young, 2008). With improper and ineffective academic intervention and psycho-social treatment, children with EBD are at a high risk for school failure, mental health issues, and social adjustment difficulties (Mathur, 2007).

## Teaching Students with EBD

The classroom setting for a student with EBD can be a challenging environment, frequently resulting in negative interactions with peers and teachers, high rates of problem behaviors and aggression, and low rates of student attention and rule compliance (Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008). While various educational placements have been used for students with EBD, the success of these placements can depend on the following:

- a. The individual academic and behavioral characteristics of the students
- b. The individual characteristics of the teachers
- c. The relationships between the students and teachers

Academic factors, social factors, and the interactions between academic and social ability must also be considered when investigating educational placements for students with EBD (Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008).

In order to provide students with EBD an appropriate, individualized education, services may be provided in a wide range of settings, spanning from general education classrooms to residential facilities. Educating students with EBD, with the necessary support, in the least restrictive environment is a requirement of IDEIA. There has been a trend in favor of educating all students with disabilities in inclusive settings, in the general education classroom. Students with EBD, however, are served in an inclusive setting at a lower rate when compared to all students with disabilities (Kern, Hilt-Panahon, Sokol, 2009). General education teachers frequently are opposed to full inclusion for students with EBD, mostly due to a perceived lack of competency on the part of the general education teacher (Niesyn, 2009). It is commonly argued that segregated classroom settings are appropriate for students with EBD because of greater

opportunities for support and individualization of instruction. At the class-wide level, however, there is frequently a lapse in the provision of structure and positive behavior interventions, contributing to an increase in problematic behavior within self-contained settings. Because effective practices are not always occurring in specialized classrooms, students with EBD continue to experience negative school outcomes (Kern, Hilt-Panahon, Sokol, 2009).

While schools have seen the graduation rates for students with disabilities increase, the graduation rate for students with EBD has not improved (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004). Students with EBD drop out of school at a rate of approximately 51%, which is higher than any other disability category (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004; Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, Young, 2008). When transitioning into adulthood, youth with EBD have especially high rates of incarceration, an issue that could be addressed if proper services were in place in school programs (Davis, 2002).

Due to the frequency of negative outcomes in and out of school, there is a need to improve the services that are provided for students with EBD. Merrell and Walker (2004) explain that the vast resources that are devoted to children with EBD are still inadequate to address the many needs that they require to succeed. Despite the efforts of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and its predecessors, students with EBD demonstrate the lowest performance of any disability category on many important outcomes (Merrell & Walker, 2004). Davis (2002), Mathur (2007), and Merrell & Walker (2004) place the blame for such poor outcomes on the quality, or lack thereof, of educational and social services provided for children with EBD.

Despite the bleak reality of educational programs for students with EBD, there are strategies that have proven to be successful. In an academic sense, successfully educating children with EBD requires that school personnel become more competent in the classroom, and more understanding of the lives children with EBD, in and out of school (Kauffman, Bantz, & McCullough, 2002). Evidence based practices for improving the academic abilities of students with EBD focus largely on student engagement and ensuring positive educational experiences. Educational decisions should be made based on student data. These data for students with EBD should inform classroom instruction, which should be conducted using research based practices. Academic and behavioral progress for students with EBD should be monitored and communicated frequently to the students' other stakeholders, including teachers, program administrators, parents, and the students themselves (Vannest, Temple-Harvey, & Mason, 2009).

### School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

To help promote appropriate behavior for all students, many schools are implementing a school-wide positive behavior support system (SWPBS). This includes defining, teaching, and reinforcing appropriate behavior, and monitoring behavioral success. Target groups are identified that need additional support at the school-wide, classroom-wide, and individual student levels (Warren, Bohanon-Edmonson, Turnbull, Sailor, Wickham, Griggs, & Beech, 2006). A SWPBS specifies which behaviors are necessary to achieve these outcomes, and what educational strategies are effective in teaching these behaviors. Those strategies are implemented throughout the day, across school settings (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Effective implementation of a SWPBS in a school may take place at four different levels: school wide, classroom, non-classroom, and individual. At the school wide level, a SWPBS is



shaped by a statement that positively explains the rationale and desired outcomes of the plan. This statement links academic success with positive behavioral outcomes, and includes the students, teachers, administration, and other school personnel. Also, positively stated rules and expectations are expressed and shared with students and staff. Lines of communication are opened between students and school personnel. Verbal communication concerning behavioral expectations is encouraged across all school settings. In PBS at the school wide level, teachers help their students learn desired behaviors through explicit instruction and practice (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Expected behaviors are encouraged and rewarded through the use of tangible reinforcements, social feedback, or positive praise (Kalke, Glanton, & Cristalli, 2007). Problem behavior is reduced through the instruction of appropriate replacement behaviors. In the school wide SWPBS, records and notes are kept so that personnel can share strategies and ideas that may work throughout the school (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

In the classroom, a SWPBS is used to support fundamental behavior management practices by teachers. This includes student supervision and frequent positive interactions. The rewards available for demonstrating appropriate behavior are posted in the classroom as a constant reminder. In a SWPBS, teachers monitor student behaviors at all times. Classrooms are organized in such a way that positive behaviors are promoted, and academic and behavioral success is optimized. The academic curriculum is followed in an organized fashion, and students are on-task regularly, reducing down time that can lead to problematic behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

In non-classroom settings, a SWPBS requires that teachers actively supervise and monitor students around the school campus while maintaining the school wide behavioral

expectations for the students. Problem behavior incidents are reduced because school staff actively scan the students, make frequent positive contact with them, and move throughout the areas where they congregate (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

For students who do not seem to respond to the proactive approaches of a SWPBS at the school wide or classroom level, individualized support systems may be created. This individualized support can take many shapes. For some students, it may be a group-based problem solving approach which can address specific behavioral issues. Some students may require individual guidance or social skills training. Other students may benefit from functional assessments of behavior, paired along with a behavioral intervention plan or a crisis plan to be implemented by school personnel. Individualized support systems in a SWPBS can vary depending on the severity of the problem behavior that the student exhibits (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

When implemented properly, a SWPBS is a proactive way to increase positive behavior for all students. This approach is more effective in addressing problematic behavior than reactive, punitive behavior management policies. There are still many schools that are not using a SWPBS, and many professionals who are unfamiliar with the practice. Widespread implementation of a SWPBS can lead to academic and behavioral success in schools, including among students with disabilities (Warren, et al., 2006).

### The Role of the Principal

The school principal is responsible for managing all operations that take place within the school setting. Though some employees and faculty members may report directly to other supervisors, the principal is ultimately responsible for, and held accountable for, all parts of the

school community. This responsibility can range from the cleanliness of the building, to school safety, to the academic performance of the students (Haberman, 1999).

In the large urban school district used in this study, the performance of school principals is evaluated three times annually by region directors using the Managerial Exempt personnel Performance Management Assessment (Appendix D). The first assessment is a planning phase, the second is a mid-year status assessment, and the third is an end-of-year overall assessment. This assessment is based on achievement of eight clearly defined competencies: vision, strategic and ethical decision making, accountability and assessment, knowledge management and innovation, managing the environment, human resources, interpersonal relationships, and community and stakeholder partnerships (FM-7037, 2010). Each of these eight competencies has specific performance indicators that are measured using a five-point Likert scale. One point indicates that an administrator does not meet standards. Two points means there are early stages of development of a skill. Three points indicate that an administrator demonstrates proficiency of a particular competency. Four points indicate that an administrator demonstrates mastery of the skill. Five points indicates that an administrator has gained mastery of a competency, and teaches others how to apply that skill. There are 25 performance indicators in all, allowing a maximum of 125 points to be awarded by the region director. These points account for 90% of an administrator's overall rating. The other 10% of their rating come from documented professional growth activities. At the end-of-year overall assessment, a principal is awarded a total score, which identifies the overall rating to be given. Principals who score a total of 67 points or below do not meet district standards. Principals who score between 68 and 85 points on this assessment meet district standards. Principals who score between 86-95 points exceed standards. Principals

who score 96 or more points on this assessment also exceed standards, to a substantial degree (FM-7037, 2010).

According to the *Managerial Exempt personnel Performance Management Assessment* (FM-7037, 2010), a principal's vision should be shared and supported by school personnel and the community. Principals should use effective planning, including the use of critical thinking and problem solving strategies, and analyzing data for continuous improvement. Decisions should be made based on available data and feedback. To exceed standards, principals should encourage positive results through explicit knowledge and instinct, and anticipate future obstacles and circumstances. Principals are charged with managing an organized facility that ensures a safe, efficient, and effective environment for the school community. Principals adapt their behavior to various situations, and are flexible when responding to their stakeholders' needs. Principals recruit, select, and retain high-performing faculty and staff members, and implement professional growth plans for them. When interacting with others, school principals should maintain mutually beneficial relationships, acknowledge the needs of others, and manage disputes in a way that will build consensus. The responsibilities of a school principal are not limited to the confines of a school building. Principals should also collaborate and communicate with parents, families, businesses, and other community members, responding to the various interests and needs of the stakeholders within the community (FM-7037, 2010).

In addition to the competencies evaluated on an administrative performance management assessment, there are other characteristics that can help school principals demonstrate success. Haberman (1999) identifies the ideologies and behaviors of principals who are more than effective. He calls these principals "star principals". Principals who are more than effective when

serving children in poverty strive to create a positive school climate, one where violence is thwarted through positive interventions. Star principals should be aware of their power, delegate it wisely, always maintaining focus on the best interests of the students. Principals who are more than effective are committed to student learning, teacher support, and promoting teaching methods that enhance learning opportunities. They strive to establish a united vision between the administration, teachers, faculty members, parents, and community, so that, as a team, the school's goals may be achieved. Star principals hold themselves and their teachers accountable for student learning. Evaluation and self-reflection, using rigorous criteria, are conducted by star principals and teachers. They are reflective, and admit mistakes, in order to make meaningful change. Principals who are more than effective foster change through thoughtful planning, motivational practices, and staff buy-in. Finally, star principals hold parents and community members in high regard, acknowledging them as an essential part of creating a successful school (Haberman, 1999). There are similarities between the characteristics of star principals, and principals who exceed district standards based on the *Managerial Exempt personnel Performance Management Assessment*.

### Linking Principal Support and Effectiveness

The fact that a school principal plays an important role in the enhancement of student learning is widely accepted. One way in which school principals can improve student success is through teacher support, in the development of classroom practices that can increase student learning (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). In the body of literature outlining effective practices of school principals, teacher support appears frequently as a way to enhance the overall effectiveness of a school setting. An administrator's ability to listen, support, comfort, and inspire is crucial to the

establishment of a positive school climate (Graseck, 2005). Donaldson, Marnik, Mackenzie and Ackerman (2009) explain that principals who are the most effective place a high priority on the relationships they establish within their school community, faculty, and staff. A principal's ultimate success, according to these researchers, hinges upon an ability to form supportive relationships with the other professionals at the school. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) conducted a meta-analytic study of school- and leadership-based practices, correlating them with student achievement, and found a positive correlation between student achievement and effective leadership. Of the school leaders, the researchers in this study find that the effective ones are the ones who have strong and meaningful communication with their teachers and students. In the analysis of 70 studies, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty find 21 areas of leadership that are the most correlated to student achievement. Of those 21 areas, 13 of them are directly tied to teacher support: culture, discipline, resources, curriculum instruction and assessment, visibility, contingent rewards, communication, input, affirmation, relationship, monitoring and evaluation, flexibility, and intellectual stimulation.

### Principals and Students with EBD

Research outlining the relationship between school principals and students with EBD is available on a small scale. Gagnon & Leone (2006) targeted principals at day-treatment centers and residential schools for students with EBD, and found that data regarding general principal characteristics was limited in scope, and found no information available at the national level. Most principals at residential schools for students with EBD have certifications and qualifications that enable them to assist students and teachers in such a restrictive setting, however certifications alone do not necessarily reflect on a principal's leadership or interpersonal

skills (Gagnon & Leone, 2006). The available data presented by Gagne & Leone (2006) allow for an initial look into some of the characteristics of principals and teachers that can contribute to academic and behavioral success for students with EBD. Further research is needed to identify differences in specific types of principal support for special education teachers and students with EBD (Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001).

George, George, Gersten, and Grosenick (1995) found a direct link between principal support and job satisfaction or occupational stress for teachers of students with EBD. They also found that a lack of administrative support is consistently cited as a source of job stress, dissatisfaction, and attrition for teachers of students with EBD. In addition, teachers of students with EBD often feel isolated from colleagues, overwhelmed with excessive paperwork, and insufficient principal support (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995). The rates of teacher attrition and turnover are high, at a national level, which has a negative effect on student achievement and school functioning (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Teacher stress can be reduced if principals allow them to not only contribute to decisions, but to also interact more with staff and administration (Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001). Teachers of students with EBD who positively regard their relationships with their principals and work environment are more likely to be committed and satisfied with their job, and less likely to experience occupational stress (Pullis, 1992).

Given the challenges associated with successfully fostering academic and behavioral success for students with EBD, and the rate of undesirable outcomes for students with EBD shown by research and statistical evidence, it can be difficult to focus on the school sites that are currently being successful. Research shows that school principals acknowledge the complex

challenge that meeting the needs of students with EBD presents (Knuth, Beaudoin, & Benner, 2007). As this study evolves, the research will encompass the positive aspects of fostering educational success for students with EBD, as evidenced in the data collected from school principals who exceed district standards, and have fist-hand experience with teachers and students in this disability category. One method of gathering such important data is through the use of phenomenological research.

### Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that investigates the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of people who have directly participated in the area being studied. Giorgi (1997) describes a phenomenon as the presence of any given precisely as it is experienced. As with many qualitative studies, it is assumed that the same experience can be perceived in different ways by different people. In phenomenology, it is the subjective experiences that are the focus of the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). The phenomenological method allows for researchers to access the various phenomena in human experience (Amedeo, 1997). In a phenomenological study, the focus is on exploring how the subjects experience a particular phenomenon, make sense of it, perceive it, describe it, and transform it into consciousness. There is a search for the essence, or core meaning, of a phenomenon as it is experienced by multiple participants (Patton, 2002). Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) describe the essence as the commonality of perception of an experience.

Two methods of phenomenological data analysis are presented by Hycner (1985) and by Moustakas and Douglass (Patton, 2002). Both approaches contain similar analytical elements, ultimately determining the essence of the experiences. Moustakas and Douglass's approach



synthesizes phenomenological data through an intense introspective examination by the researcher, and interaction with the data that becomes progressively acute to finding the essence of the experience (Patton, 2002). Hycner's approach also allows for introspective examination, interaction with the data, and progressive searches for meaning within the data. Additionally, Hycner's approach increases validity by reviewing the data, and meaning found within the data, with the research participants as it is being analyzed (Hycner, 1985). Hycner's guidelines for phenomenological data analysis was the research methodology used for this study.

Hycner's method of phenomenological research was published twenty-five years ago, however more recent applications of this approach can be seen in the work of Calvey & Jansz (2005), Macfarlane (2007), Mertzman (2008), Murphy (2009), and Wolf (2008). Hycner's approach is a fifteen-step format for analyzing interview data collected for phenomenological studies. The steps are as follows (Hycner, 1985):

1. *Transcription*

During the transcription stage, the researcher converts audio recordings and notes collected from the interview into written form (Hycner, 1985).

2. *Bracketing and phenomenological reduction*

Bracketing and phenomenological reduction takes place to identify internal biases or assumptions with regards to the experience being studied (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). During this introspective examination by the researcher, presuppositions about the research topic are listed to ensure that the data is approached with a sense of open-mindedness (Hycner, 1985).

3. *Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole*

The researcher reads the transcription and listens to the audio recording of the interviews to become familiar with them.

4. *Delineating units of general meaning*

The researcher finds statements within the data that are meaningful to the research study.

5. *Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question*

The researcher identifies which units of meaning are relevant to the research questions.

6. *Training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning*

Hycner's approach includes opportunities for other independent researchers to repeat the aforementioned steps, looking for agreement between the researchers in the identification of meaningful data, and how it relates to the research questions. This step is a cause of concern for this study because of issues related to independent researcher selection. While it may be useful to select a focus group to evaluate research data, the qualifications of independent observers can be called into question during the analysis of data. For the current study, this step is considered unnecessary, and will not be included.

7. *Eliminating redundancies*

The researcher eliminates pieces of data that have similar meaning to those that have already been noted. The researcher records the number of similar statements that have been made, though only one will remain within the set of data.

8. *Clustering units of relevant meaning*

The researcher groups the units of meaning together based on common themes or essences.

*9. Determining themes from clusters of meaning*

In Hycner's (1985) approach, the researcher determines central themes that unite the various clustered units of meaning.

*10. Writing a summary for each individual interview*

The researcher summarizes each set of interview data independently, identifying meaningful statements, as well as general and specific themes that have emerged as a result of careful analysis.

*11. Return to the participant with the summary and themes: Conducting a second interview*

Summaries completed by the researcher are returned to the research participants. This allows the research participants to check for the validity of the statements, and provides an opportunity for further dialogue or even a second interview if necessary.

*12. Modifying themes and summary*

If there is new data collected from dialogue or second interviews with the research participants, the researcher conducts analysis using the aforementioned steps, and includes this analysis with the original data.

*13. Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews*

The researcher looks for common themes within all the data sets combined.

*14. Contextualization of themes*

The researcher finds ways in which the themes that have emerged fit within the context of the research questions being investigated.

#### *15. Composite Summary*

The last step in Hycner's approach is to summarize all of the data, noting similarities and differences between the participants, and ultimately identifying the essence of the research study (Hycner, 1985).

These guidelines can be used to analyze interview data, aiming to find the essence of the principals' experiences with students with EBD and their teachers.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the qualitative research methodology that was used in this study. Qualitative research designs are characterized by a concern for context and meaning, the study of behavior in the natural setting, and the use of a human investigator as the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data. Qualitative research uses descriptive methods, such as video- and audio-recordings of open-ended interviews, as well as field notes and journals, as a way to collect and present data. Qualitative researchers aim to provide a thorough description of the experiences and perspectives of the subjects in the study. Aspects of qualitative design are outlined broadly before the onset of a study, but the design emerges and becomes more specific as the study is taking place. The data are analyzed through inductive analysis. In this process, complex meanings are identified through analysis of the experiences of the participants (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006).

The type of qualitative research design that was used in this study was phenomenology. Phenomenological research aims to find the meanings behind lived experiences, as perceived by people, or groups of people. The researcher aimed to find a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, looking for core meanings, or the essence, of the experience. Data was collected through direct interviews, and analyzed using a systematic approach (Patton, 2002). In this phenomenological study, the researcher examined the lived experiences of school principals in a large urban school district who met specific criteria and facilitated programs for students with EBD.

## Demographics

### *Urban School District*

The urban school district used in this study was among the largest school districts in the United States of America. This school district served over 340,000 students in 392 schools. This school district had an annual capital and operating budget of \$5.5 billion, and had 50,271 employees, including 22,006 teachers (Demographics, n.d.). In the large urban school district used in this study, there were 55 secondary schools that had programs for students with EBD.

### *Regions*

For operational reasons, the large urban school district used in this study had been divided into five separate regions. Each region was led by a Region Superintendent, with region administrative directors serving in a variety of leadership roles (e.g., budget, curriculum, personnel). The region superintendents served on the cabinet for the superintendent of the large urban school district, to whom they reported directly. Region superintendents and other administrators were responsible for operation of all schools (elementary, middle, high, alternative schools, or any other school district facility) that were located within their respective region. Although the regions did not follow clear boundary lines, they were located within specified geographic areas. The geographic location for each region, in relation to the county, was as follows: Region I included the schools in the North-Central area, Region II included the East-Central areas, Region III included the Central area, Region IV included the South-Central areas, and Region V included the South. For the purposes of this study, regions III, IV and V were selected due to geographical proximity to the researcher. Of the 55 secondary schools with

programs for EBD in the large urban school district, 29 of them were located in regions III, IV, and V.

### Subject Selection

The researcher selected the participants for this study based on the recommendations of region directors. The researcher contacted, via phone call, a region administrator from the urban school district Regions III, IV, and V. The study was explained, and the director was asked to nominate all secondary school principals who met the participation requirements, and might have been willing to participate. The requirements for participation in this study included the following:

- a. A rating of at least *Exceeds Standards* on the most recent *Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment* (FM-7037, 2010).
- b. The principal has had programs for students with EBD for at least three years during their experience as a school principal.
- c. The principal was willing to participate in the study, and gave consent to engage in interviews that were to be audio-recorded.
- d. The principal was been nominated for participation by a region administrator.

Following the conferences with the region administrators, the researcher combined the list of nominated principals and selected six of them randomly. The researcher contacted the randomly selected principals via email to request their participation, attaching the principal letter (Appendix E) to the email. All of the contacted principals agreed to participate in the study. The principal letter included the following:

- a. A brief background of the research study

- b. Participation requirements
- c. An outline of research procedures
- d. Researcher contact information
- e. Request for interview times, dates, and locations

For confidentiality purposes, as the researcher received responses from the selected principals, the names of the school principals and their schools were replaced with alpha-numeric codes. For example, the first principal to respond was coded P-1 (the second P-2, etc...).

## Research Procedures

### *Interview Planning*

Upon receiving responses from selected principals, the researcher reviewed the recommended times, dates, and venues to set an appointment for a face-to-face interview. The participants were contacted by the researcher, via email, to schedule the date, time, and location where the interview took place.

The researcher assembled an “expert panel” consisting of five people who were in the field of special education, were not otherwise involved with this study, and had an advanced degree and experience working with children with EBD in a school setting. The expert panel aided the researcher in developing a set of guide questions that were used in the interviews (Appendix C). The expert panel helped to measure for accuracy of content, pertinence to the research questions, and face validity. The researcher required at least 80% agreement among the members of the panel for every question in order for it to be included in the study. The open-ended guide questions supported each research question.



During the interviews, each participant was asked the same guide questions, in exactly the same order. This ensured that the data was complete for each participant, and researcher biases were reduced. By having responses to the same guide questions, evaluation and analysis of the data was conducted in a more organized fashion (Patton, 2002).

The research questions addressed by this study were follows:

1. How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?
2. How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?
3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:
  - a. Allotment of budgetary resources
  - b. Disciplinary assistance

The first research question explored the experiences the principals have had implementing practices which have helped their students with EBD. Questions were asked regarding disciplinary referral rates, out-of-school suspension data, programmatic data, and how this data has informed implemented practices. The researcher sought to find if the data supported growth, how progress was measured, and how data informed decisions made on a programmatic level for students with EBD. The second research question explored principals' experiences in supporting teachers of students with EBD. Principal interactions with teachers of students with EBD were described to assess teacher satisfaction and feelings of support. In addition, the researcher explored which practices were most effective, from the perspective of the school

principal, in supporting teachers of students with EBD. The third research question was guided by two specific areas of administrative leadership. The purpose for selecting these areas was to target administrative practices that have encouraged positive outcomes for students with EBD. The experiences cited were unique to each principal; however the analysis of their experiences uncovered commonalities. By limiting this question to two areas of administrative leadership, the discussion was more focused.

### *Data Collection*

The interviews were organized into three categories, which directly reflected the three research questions addressed by this study: program impact, teacher support, administrative leadership. Each of these categories was comprised by a subset of 7-10 guide questions that were asked of each participant during the one-hour allotted interview session.

The researcher audio-recorded each interview using a digital voice recorder. The purpose of audio-recording the interview was to collect all of the data in a full and fair manner (Patton, 2002). Also, the researcher took written notes of the school atmosphere and setting, and other facets of the interview that were not clearly discernable on the audio recording. Upon transcription of the audio recordings, the researcher maintained possession of the recorded data in a locked location in the researcher's home, where it shall remain for a period of three years.

### *Data Analysis*

The data for this study was analyzed using Hycner's (1985) guidelines for analyzing phenomenological interview data. For clarification and organization, the data analysis as

presented reflected the procedures for one principal interview (P-1). Steps 1 through 11 were repeated for each subsequent interviewee.

### *1. Transcription*

The data for this study (audio recordings and accompanying field notes) were transcribed by the researcher. Exact transcriptions and notes were transcribed, using the word-processing program Microsoft Word, for further analysis. The researcher made an exact copy of each of the audio-recorded interviews in written form.

### *2. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction*

The researcher listed preexisting ideas and suppositions related to principals, teachers, and students with EBD (Appendix H). This process prepared the researcher for objective data analysis, suspended personal beliefs, and allowed the experiences of the principals to be fully explored. The bracketed list was created in a Microsoft Word document.

### *3. Listening to the interview for the sense of the whole*

The researcher listened to the audio-recording of the interview for subject P-1 as often as was necessary to assure the exact details were transcribed. The researcher read the written transcripts and reviewed the field notes to develop a keen awareness and familiarity of all parts of the P-1 interview.

### *4. Delineating units of general meaning*

The researcher reviewed and examined, line by line, the P-1 interview in search of units of meaning. Meaningful statements or stories were transcribed into a separate document, replicating its presentation from the original interview.

Meaningful statements were defined as those that speak directly to the research or guide questions, and were categorized into the areas of program impact, teacher support, or administrative leadership. Upon review of the data, commonly used phrases, ideas, or experiences were used to help develop the framework for identification of meaningful statements.

#### *5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question*

The researcher examined all of the units of meaning identified in the P-1 interview data, and identified which research question each pertained to. Responses that spoke to a particular research question were noted by the researcher, using numerical codes (1=question one, 2=question two, 3=question three). Data considered non-essential to the research questions were coded Not Applicable (NA). The researcher listed all units of relevant meaning under the appropriate research question.

The expert panel reviewed the placement of meaningful statements into specific categories to ensure inter-rater reliability. The researcher presented 25% of the categorized data to the expert panel. The panel examined the data, looking for appropriate placement of the data within the categories (research questions). Members of the panel placed each unit of data with the research question that it addresses. The data categorization of the panel was compared to that completed by the researcher. To proceed, the researcher required at least 80% agreement (inter-rater reliability) of the categorized data. There were no discrepancies among the reviewers.

#### *6. Eliminating Redundancies*

Among the units of meaning for interview P-1, the researcher eliminated repetitious statements, keeping only one unit of meaning. The researcher made note of how many times a particular statement was listed.

#### *7. Clustering units of relevant meaning*

The researcher examined the units of meaning identified in the P-1 interview, and looked to see if any of the statements had common themes, or could be clustered together. Each cluster was given a title. For example, there were several statements made by principal P-1 that spoke to the importance of inclusion for students with EBD. Therefore, these statements were placed in a cluster called “Inclusion for students with EBD”. This was repeated for the meaningful statements that addressed each research question in the P-1 data set. The themes were not identified prior to data collection because all preconceived ideas related to this study were suspended by the researcher.

#### *8. Determining themes from clusters of meaning*

For each research question, the researcher examined all of the clusters to find larger themes that spoke to the essence of principal P-1’s experiences. Themes were not established prior to data collection, due to the wide scope of the data for this study.

#### *9. Writing a summary of each individual interview*

The researcher compiled the relevant data, themes, and clusters, and provided a written summary of the data for the P-1 interview using the Microsoft Word word-processing program (Appendix G).

#### *10. Return to the participant with the summary and themes*

The written summary was sent to principal P-1 for review. Accompanying the summary was a letter written by the researcher in which principal P-1 was asked to review the data, and respond if there are any concerns or disagreements, using the contact information provided (phone number, email address) within a given time frame of two weeks. None of the principals expressed disagreement with the summarized interviews.

#### *11. Modifying themes and summary*

The researcher did not need to collect new data from an additional interview with principal P-1. This step was not necessary for this study.

Steps 12 through 14 of data analysis require that the research data for all of the interviews be combined.

#### *12. Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews*

The researcher examined all of the interview data, looking for common themes or experiences that occurred among the various interviews. Commonalities among the interviews were examined based on each research question individually, and noted by the researcher. Any themes that were unique to a particular interview were also be noted by the researcher, and considered outliers.

#### *13. Contextualization of themes*

The researcher took the clustered and unique themes that have emerged among the interview data, and described them in the context of the research question that they addressed. This was repeated for each of the research questions.

#### *14. Composite Summary*

The researcher summarized all of the research data that was collected, the themes that emerged, and the experiences that the participants had with regards to each research question. The researcher described the overall picture that emerged from this investigation, noting similarities among the participants and overall themes that spoke to the essence of their experiences.

### Validity and Reliability

Validity in this study was enhanced by the verification of the data among the research participants (Hycner, 1985). Because the data was submitted to each principal for evaluation before further analysis took place, validity was enhanced. Collaboration with an expert panel to verify guide questions and review placement of data into clusters and themes enhances validity for this study. Validity was also enhanced through the use of a theoretical framework for data analysis that was based on substantial research.

This study increased reliability based upon the structure of the procedures used for data collection and analysis. Every principal in this study met the same requirements for participation, and there was no differentiation of treatment among the participants. Identical questions were asked in the same order of each of the participants. Inter-rater reliability was enhanced for the identification of meaningful statements through consult with the expert panel.

### Summary

A phenomenological research methodology was used to examine the experiences of principals in the large urban school district who “exceed district standards” and have programs for students with EBD at their schools. Standardized open-ended interviews were conducted by

the researcher with principals who met specific criteria and agreed to participate. Data was analyzed using guidelines set by Hycner (1985), to find the essences of the principals' experiences as they related to the research questions for this study.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH DATA**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight to the experiences of select school principals in an urban setting, with regards to educational programming for students with EBD. A phenomenological research model was used to obtain data that address the principals' experiences in three areas: programs for students with EBD, teachers of students with EBD, and the administrative areas of funding and discipline for students with EBD. The researcher assembled an expert panel to help develop and validate interview guide questions, the responses to which would comprise the data used in this study. Guide questions were constructed to address each of the three research questions. Members of the expert panel were used to validate the correlation of transcribed interview data and research questions. Also, members of the expert panel validated the identification of themes and commonalities within individual interviews and among all interviews. Reliability of this research process was enhanced by ensuring that each interview followed the same procedures, asking each principal the same guide questions, in exactly the same order.

### **Qualitative Research Process**

#### *Interview Guide Questions*

The researcher constructed three research questions that address different areas of a school principal's experiences with students with EBD. Once the research questions were created, the researcher contacted five professionals with advanced college degrees, experience with school administration, and experience with students with EBD. These five people agreed to

participate in this study as members of the expert panel. Together with members of the expert panel, the researcher developed 6-9 guide questions that address each research question. The guide questions were presented to the entire expert panel for review via email. Members of the expert panel were instructed to review each guide question in terms of its relation to the research question. Members of the expert panel were to rate each guide question as “acceptable”, or “unacceptable”, and return the analysis to the researcher. All of the guide questions were rated “acceptable” by at least four of the five members of the expert panel. The researcher had an established criteria of 80% agreement among members of the expert panel for each guide question in order for it to be used. This criteria was met for all of the questions presented to the expert panel.

## Research Data

### *Subject Selection*

After the research methodology and guide questions had been established, the researcher submitted the research proposal to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Central Florida for approval. Upon receipt of approval from the University of Central Florida, the researcher submitted this research study to the research review department in this urban school district. When the researcher obtained approval from the urban school district, subject selection began. The researcher contacted region administrators for three regions in the large urban school district. The region administrators were asked to identify school principals in their region who met the criteria for participation in this study. The researcher compiled the list of all principals who were recommended by their region administrator. In total, 20 principals were recommended

by region administrators for this study. The researcher randomly selected six of them to participate in an interview. Each principal was contacted via email with a request to participate in this study (Appendix E). Within two weeks, the researcher had a response from each of the six principals, agreeing to participate in the study.

Of the six principals who agreed to participate in this study, two were female and four were male. All of them had been principal at their school for at least three years. Two of the principals were from district region 3, two were from district region 4, and two were from district region 5. Three of the principals were of Hispanic descent, two were Caucasian, and one was African American. Two of the participants were principals at high schools, and four were principals at middle schools. Table 1 provides descriptive information for the principals who participated in this study.

**Table 1: Principal descriptive information**

Principal	Type of School	Region	Gender	Ethnicity
P-1	Middle	5	Female	Hispanic
P-2	Senior	5	Male	Caucasian
P-3	Middle	3	Male	African American
P-4	Middle	4	Female	Caucasian
P-5	Middle	4	Male	Hispanic
P-6	Senior	3	Male	Hispanic

### *Principals and Schools*

P-1 was formerly a classroom teacher and was certified in many different areas. Her certifications included: Elementary and Secondary Spanish, Social Science grades 6-12, Elementary and Secondary Reading, Middle Grades Endorsement, and Educational Leadership – No Level Designation. P-1 had 21 years of experience in the school system, and had been an

administrator for 15 years. P-1's middle school had a 93% minority rate and was a Title I school. 86% of the students received free or reduced lunch. On the most recent statewide assessment, P-1's school earned a C grade.

Information regarding P-2's certifications and experience were no longer available due to his retirement from the school system. His senior high school had a 60% minority rate and was not a Title I school. 23% of the students received free or reduced lunch. The most recent statewide assessment results released for senior high schools showed that P-2's school earned a B grade.

P-3 had the following educational certifications: Marketing grades 6-12, and Educational Leadership - No Level Designation. P-3 had 17 years of experience in the school system, 9 as an administrator. P-3's middle school had a 99% minority rate and was a Title I school. 95% of the students received free or reduced lunch. On the most recent statewide assessment, P-3's school received an I grade.

P-4 had classroom experience teaching students with EBD. She had the following certifications: Specific Learning Disabilities, Emotionally Handicapped, and Administration and Supervision. P-4 had 27 years of experience in the school system, 20 years as an administrator. P-4's school had a 95% minority rate and was a Title I school. 78% of the students received free or reduced lunch. On the most recent statewide assessment, P-4's school earned an A grade.

P-5 had the following educational certifications: Technology Education, and Educational Leadership. He had 31 years of experience in the school system, with 21 years as an administrator. P-5's school had a 94% minority rate and was a Title I school. 85% of the students

received free or reduced lunch. On the most recent statewide assessment, P-5's school earned a B grade.

P-6 had the following educational certifications: Middle Grades General Science, and School Principal – No level Designation. He had 21 years of experience in the school system, 15 years as an administrator. P-6's school had a 93% minority rate and was a Title I school. 71% of the students received free or reduced lunch. The most recent statewide assessment results released for senior high schools shows that P-6's school earned a B grade.

#### *Interview Procedures*

After randomly selecting six principals from the compiled list from region administrators, the researcher contacted them via email. The email included a brief description of the study, participation requirements, and a request for participation. Within one week of contact, five of the six principals responded with willingness to participate. The researcher contacted the one principal who did not respond with another email, including the same information. Within two days, that principal replied with willingness to participate. The researcher scheduled an interview with each of the six principals via email. Two of the interviews were scheduled in a time-slot that was during the school day. Four of the interviews were scheduled after school dismissal. The researcher conducted each interview in the principal's office at his/her respective school.

Prior to each interview, the researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study, and thanked the principal for agreeing to participate. The researcher explained that the interview would last between 40 minutes to an hour. Each interview was audio-recorded using two recording devices: one digital, one cassette recorder. Following each interview, the researcher explained that a summary of the interview would be provided for their review.

### *Data Analysis*

After the six interviews had been conducted, the researcher analyzed the interview data using Hycner's (1985) guidelines for phenomenological data analysis. The researcher used the following protocol:

1. Transcribe the audio-recorded interviews onto a password-protected desktop computer in Microsoft Word (word processing program).
2. Create a list of preconceived suppositions regarding educational programming for students with EBD, the role of the teacher for students with EBD, and the role of the principal in providing funding and disciplinary assistance for students with EBD (bracketing).
3. Listen to each interview multiple times to gain a sense of the whole.
4. Find meaningful statements that emerge from each interview.
5. Determine which research question each of these meaningful statements addresses.
6. Allow members of the expert panel review the identified meaningful statements and their relation to the research question. The researcher asked the members of the expert panel to look for discrepancies in the relationship between the meaningful statements and their corresponding research question. No discrepancies were identified by the expert panel.
7. Eliminate redundant meaningful statements from the list of relevant data within each interview.
8. Combine similar meaningful statements within each interview into clusters, those which all spoke to a common idea.

9. From the clusters of meaningful statements, identify several themes that emerged.

Each theme addressed one of the research questions for this study.

10. Summarize each interview in terms of the themes that had emerged from the clustered meaningful statements.

11. Return a copy of the summarized interview to each respective principal via email.

The researcher asked the principal to review the summary. If the principal had a disagreement with any of the data that was presented, or if any of the themes needed to be clarified, the researcher allowed a one-week time period to schedule a follow-up interview, at the principal's request. None of the six principals requested a follow up interview.

12. Conduct follow-up interviews. Because none of the principals in the current study requested a follow-up interview, there was no need for the researcher to modify any of the themes or meaningful statements.

13. Combine the themes for all of the interviews, looking for commonalities between them. Common themes between the interviews were clustered together. The researcher noted how many of the principals had identified each particular common theme.

14. Identify which research question the clustered themes addressed. The identification of common themes between the interviews, as well as their relevance to particular research questions was examined by members of the expert panel. There were no discrepancies between the researcher and the expert panel as to the appropriateness of the data, themes, or their relationship to the research questions.

15. Create a composite summary, linking common themes between all of the interviews with corresponding research questions. The researcher noted how many of the principals shared a common theme. The researcher identified common themes that had been shared by at least four of the six principals. Themes that were shared by fewer than four of the principals were considered outliers. The researcher also took note of the outlying themes, however they were not part of the composite summary.

For organizational purposes, the researcher briefly summarized each theme and recorded it in a spreadsheet created using the program Microsoft Excel. This spreadsheet was used to help identify the frequency of each theme, as it pertains to each research question, among all of the interviews. This spreadsheet also aided in the identification of themes which were outliers in this study.

### Bracketing

The methods of phenomenological outlined by Hycner (1985) include bracketing researcher presuppositions in order to reduce unintended bias, strengthening validity and reliability. This is done by listing those presuppositions on a separate document. By including notions regarding students with EBD, principal support for programs for students with EBD and teachers, and administrative issues (funding and disciplinary support), the researcher is able to remain cognizant of such ideas, and can thereby reduce bias during data analysis. The complete list of bracketed presuppositions used by the researcher in this study is included in Appendix H.



## Qualitative Research Questions and Outcomes

This phenomenological study utilized three research questions, each with 7-10 guide questions, to examine the experiences of select secondary school principals with students with EBD, and their teachers. The research questions addressed the following issues: educational programming for students with EBD, supporting teachers of students with EBD, and the principal's role regarding funding and discipline for students with EBD.

Reviewing the transcribed responses to the guide questions revealed commonalities among the interviews. The researcher identified these commonalities, which were supported by transcribed quotations from each interview. After identifying commonalities among the responses, the researcher identified themes that had emerged as a result of the common statements. Field notes from each of the interviews are presented, describing the setting and atmosphere where each interview took place. Following the field notes, the three research questions for this study are presented in sequential order, along with commonalities that exist among the interview data pertinent to each question. After presenting the commonalities, the researcher presents outlier units of meaning, those which emerged from only one interview, for each research question.

### *Field Notes*

The P-1 interview took place after school. The office was quiet, the only students who remained in the building were part of an after-school program. P-1 is a female, of Hispanic descent. She has been a school administrator for approximately 15 years, with four years experience as the principal at the current school. P-1 stopped working on other tasks to participate in the interview. We met in P-1's office that had a conference table, several file

cabinets and book shelves. Awards and hand-made gifts adorned the walls. P-1 was very welcoming and upbeat.

The P-2 interview occurred just after student dismissal. There were many students in the office. There was much activity taking place in the main office. P-2 is a Caucasian male who has been a school administrator for approximately 15 years. He has received many accolades for his role as a school administrator, and plaques and awards lined his walls. P-2 was not ready for the interview when I arrived, and apologized for the delay. The P-2 office had a couch and a turtle aquarium. It was a soothing place to be. P-2 spoke very cordially and seemed genuinely happy to be participating in the interview.

The P-3 interview took place during the school day. The school was located in a very low socio-economic area. The outer walls of this school were bare. There were few windows to the outside. The school was built like a fortress. Upon entering the doors, visitors realize that the school is built to face inwards. There was a well-manicured courtyard with picnic tables and student artwork displayed throughout. I was greeted with pleasantries by the security guards. There were several students in the hallway. The students in this school seemed happy to be there. The interview took place in the principal's conference room, adjacent to the principal's office. P-3 is an African-American male who has been an administrator for approximately 10 years. P-3 cancelled a conflicting appointment so that the interview could take place.

The interview for P-4 took place on a teacher planning day. There were few faculty members present. The office was quiet. There was a meeting in progress in an assistant principal's office that caused a delay in beginning the interview. P-4 is a Caucasian female who

has been an administrator for approximately 10 years. P-4 was very friendly and provided bagels for everyone in attendance that day, even offering me one before the interview.

The P-5 interview was scheduled at a time that coincided with school dismissal. P-5 was in the front of the school assisting security guards with the dismissal process before the interview took place. P-5 is a Hispanic male who has been an administrator for approximately 20 years. He left the door open during our interview, and was interrupted several times by faculty members. This did not appear to bother the principal, rather it seemed quite commonplace. P-5 was very friendly and upbeat during the interview.

The P-6 interview took place in the morning on a school day. The office was crowded and it took several minutes for the principal to make time for the interview. P-6 is a Hispanic male who has been an administrator for approximately 12 years. The interview took place at the principal's desk. There was a large fish tank in the office. Trophies, awards, and other symbols of school pride were on display all over P-6's office. P-6 wore a collared shirt with the school's crest on it.

### Presentation of Commonalities

Analysis of the transcribed interviews revealed several commonalities among the participants with regards to the research questions for this study. Commonalities are presented, along with an example of a direct quotation, taken from the transcribed interviews, that supports the identified commonality. A complete list of quotations supporting each commonality can be found in Appendix I.

Research Question One: How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

*Identified Commonality #1*

Regarding educational programs for students with EBD, the principals strongly advocated the use of inclusive practices for students with EBD. All six of the principals used some form of inclusion of students with EBD in the general education setting. The forms of inclusion varied. General education academic classes, electives, lunch time, and hallway transitions were all mentioned as ways to include students with EBD with the students in the general education setting.

P-1 stressed that access to the general education setting for students with EBD varied based on the individual needs of each student. P-1 advocated inclusion for all students with EBD who could handle the placement, based on the recommendation of the classroom teachers.

P-1: “If the student should be included in the regular program, they are included in the regular program.”

P-2 commented on the size of the inclusion program, one in which placement is based on teacher and parent recommendation.

P-2: “...we have a very large inclusion program here...it works for us.”

P-3 provided access to the general education setting for students with EBD primarily through inclusion in school-wide activities, hallway transitions and lunch.

P-3: “Well one way, prior to my getting here, they just had them grouped in those classrooms for the day, and I have semi-mainstreamed them. You know, go out to different classes throughout the building, other than electives.”

P-4 also mentioned including students with EBD in school-wide activities. Additionally, P-4 strongly advocated including students with EBD in the general education setting as much as possible to prepare them for the “real world”.

P-4: “...the ultimate goal is mainstreaming...trying to get them ready for the real world.”

P-5 mentioned a large population of students with EBD in inclusion settings, some of whom do not require any additional support beyond that provided in a general education class.

P-5: “I mainstream them into the general ed classes...we do have a lot of inclusion classes.”

P-6 mentioned that the majority of students with EBD are in inclusion courses. It is the philosophy of P-6 to include students with EBD with the general education population as much as possible. P-6 has made changes to increase access to the general education setting for students with EBD.

P-6: “We are pretty happy that we’ve been able to put a lot of the kids, a majority of the kids in our inclusion courses. And they’re functioning fairly well.”

The commonalities between the interview data suggest a theme of Inclusion for students with EBD. The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Vision, Strategic and Ethical Decision Making,

Accountability and Assessment, Knowledge Management and Innovation, and Managing the Environment. Table 2 provides a brief summary of principal statements that support this theme.

**Table 2: Principals’ responses supporting inclusion for students with EBD**

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
Students who should be included are.	Large inclusion program.	Made changes so children with EBD had access to gen. ed. classes.	Ultimate goal is mainstreaming.	Large inclusion program.	Majority of students included.
If teacher wants a student included, the student is included.	Teacher recommendation for inclusion.	Included with general population for lunch.	Try inclusion classes to move students along.	Some have gen. ed. classes without additional support.	In gen. ed. As much as possible.
Students are progressively included when they are ready. Inclusion is used in electives.	Inclusion based on teacher, parent, and IEP team decision.	Included in school activities.	Get ready for the real world.  Made changes so students could have inclusion classes. Students are Included in school activities and awards.	Some are doing well without additional support.	Made changes to increase access

*Identified Commonality #2*

With regards to educational programming for students with EBD, the principals mentioned that students with EBD are given access to the general education curriculum, regardless of their classroom placement. Four of the principals stressed the importance of providing students with EBD with the same academic curriculum and materials as students in the

general education setting. P-1 had to make changes to ensure that students with EBD had access the same academic curriculum and materials as students in general education classes.

P-1: “Changes happen mainly in the areas of the regular curriculum... the books that were used in EBD and the VE settings were not regular curriculum books. That has changed.”

P-3 believed in providing students with EBD all of the same opportunities afforded to students in the general education setting, including taking standardized tests.

P-3: “I think EBD students should be afforded the same opportunity as general education students.”

P-4 ensured that students with EBD had access to the same academic curriculum and materials as the general education population, and that the content was presented with the same rigor as it would be in the general education setting.

P-4: “And all the tools and resources. The same things that everyone else has, ensuring that they have it too.”

P-5 provided access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD by treating students with EBD the same as students in the general education setting.

P-5: “I think everybody’s entitled to an education. And we try to treat our students in the EBD program just like we treat our regular ed. students.”

The commonalities between these statements indicate a theme of “access to general education” for students with EBD. The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Vision, Strategic and



Ethical Decision Making, Knowledge Management and Innovation, and Managing the Environment. Table 3 presents summarized statements that support this theme.

**Table 3: Principals’ responses supporting access to general education**

P-1	P-3	P-4	P-5
Made changes to provide general education textbooks for students with EBD.	Student with EBD have same opportunities as students in gen. ed.	All students have the same tools and resources.	Students with EBD treated same as students in gen. ed.
Made changes to provide the same technology and books.	Students with EBD have access to same assessments as students in gen. ed.	Students with EBD have to meet the same academic standards.	The program is not much different from gen. ed. population.
Students with EBD use same programs as students in gen. ed.		Curriculum is not watered down for students with EBD.	Visitors may not realize the class is for students with EBD.
Teachers of students with EBD are trained to implement gen. ed. Curriculum.		Equal access to the same education.	

*Identified Commonality #3*

Regarding placement of students with EBD in various educational settings, the principals stressed the importance of using available data, academic and behavioral. All six principals used data to inform educational placement decisions for students with EBD. P-1 used academic and behavioral data to place students with EBD in various class settings.

P-1: “...we use data from the FCAT, and the data from the individual assessments, from the interim assessments, to guide placement for the following year.”

P-2 analyzed data and relied on teacher review of student progress to ensure that students were placed appropriately.

P-2: “We look at the whole child, and we work really closely with our EBD teachers. We need to know what the weaknesses are, and what the strengths are as far as those kids.

P-3 used data to ensure that students with EBD are placed in the proper setting.

P-3: “...we use the data to guide instruction, and placement of those kids in the right class.”

P-4 used academic and behavioral data to inform placement for students with EBD.

P-4: “You obviously use all the data on a regular basis.”

P-5 explained that data drives all programs at the school, not just those for students with EBD.

P-5: “Data... drives our program. Not only regular ed. programs, but also students with disabilities.”

P-6 incorporated available data with the students’ IEP meetings to inform placement decisions for students with EBD.

P-6: “[On Placement] The IEP is the main one... we’ll go back to the table and look at what our options are and what would be best for the child.”

The commonalities among the responses indicate the theme “Data informed placement for students with EBD”. The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Strategic and Ethical Decision Making, Accountability and Assessment, and Knowledge Management and Innovation. Table 4 shows summarized principal statements that support the theme “Data informs placement for students with EBD”.

**Table 4: Principals’ responses supporting data informed placement for students with EBD**

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
Uses FCAT data, individual and interim assessments for placement. Behavioral progress measured and used to inform placement. Placement is monitored.	Works with teachers to find strengths and weaknesses.	Data guides instruction and placement.	Data is used regularly.	Data drives all programs.	The IEP team uses data to find placement options for students with EBD.
	Reviews progress with teachers.	Data is guides placement for students with EBD and students in gen. ed. Setting.	Content data is used.	Data informs placement in targeted content areas.	Data and social skills are considered.
			Point system used to as behavioral data.	Data is examined constantly.	Data is collected prior to IEP meting so accommodations can be made.
			Academic and behavioral progress is monitored.	Looks for trends in the data.	

*Identified Commonality #4*

Regarding educational programming for students with EBD, the principals advocated the use of a points-based positive behavior support system. Four of the principals mentioned the importance of using a points-system for students with EBD. P-1 stressed the importance of carrying out the positive behavior support system with fidelity.

P-1: “...use the point system as it was meant to be utilized.”

P-3 used a point system with students with EBD to reinforce appropriate behavior, allowing students from low-income households to earn tangible rewards.

P-4 uses a comprehensive points system to reward students with EBD for appropriate behavior.

P-4: "...we have a point system, the point sheets that they use throughout the course of the day, target behaviors, effort, academic success, and the teachers sometimes also write notes in the journal or we'll send home a note. Or just call them right there on the spot if they need to."

P-5 implemented a positive behavior system school-wide, which helped reduce out-of-school suspensions.

P-5: "We're also a pilot behavior school...in fact we won a gold medal for the 2010-2011 school year for our positive behavior school. Our suspensions have gone down dramatically."

The commonalities among these responses suggest a theme of "comprehensive positive reinforcement system". The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Vision, Strategic and Ethical Decision Making, Knowledge Management and Innovation, and Managing the Environment. Table 5 shows summarized statements that support the theme "comprehensive positive reinforcement system".

**Table 5: Principals’ responses supporting comprehensive positive reinforcement system**

P-1	P-3	P-4	P-5
Uses point system the way it is supposed to be used.	Point system driven by behavior in several areas.	Point system has point sheets, target behaviors, parent communication.	Positive behavior support system has worked.
Points systems are necessary.	Uses a behavior modification point system.	Point system incorporates positive reinforcement.	Uses the system with fidelity.
Points are related to a point-store.	Students from low-income households appreciate tangible rewards. Point store is supplied from donations.		

*Research Question One: Summary of Identified Commonalities and Themes*

Analyzing the commonalities among principal responses to interview guide questions revealed several themes. With regards to programming for students with EBD, the principals who met the qualifications for this study do implement practices, policies and changes that positively impact their students with EBD. The themes that support this statement are: a) inclusion for students with EBD, b) access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD, c) data informed placement for students with EBD, and d) comprehensive positive reinforcement system.

*Research Question One: Outliers*

Upon analysis of the interview data, there were themes that emerged from some of the interviews that were unique to that specific principal’s experience. Themes that were unique to a specific principal were called outliers. It is important to mention outlying themes because they

speak to the essence of the specific principal's experiences with students with EBD and their teachers.

With respect to educational programming for students with EBD, P-4 shared experiences in ensuring that there was access to technology.

P-4: "...technology. Just equal access to things."

P-4 also was driven by the philosophy that the role of the school is to prepare students with EBD for the "real world".

P-4: "...it's teaching them real-world applications because sometimes these kids are detached from that."

P-5 had a positive outlook on the programming for students with EBD, and made meaningful statements supporting that outlook with greater frequency than the other principals.

P-5: "A strong supporter for the EBD students. I would say I'm an advocate for them."

Research Question Two: How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Identified Commonality #1*

Regarding principal support for teachers of students with EBD, many commonalities existed among the data collected for this study. Five of the six principals reported that one way to support teachers was to hand-select those who teach students with EBD. Due to the nature of educational programming for students with EBD, the principals explained that only certain teachers are prepared to thrive in that classroom setting. The principals support their teachers by ensuring that they are in classroom settings that are compatible with their personalities and areas of expertise. P-2 stressed the importance of finding a compatible match between teachers and students with EBD.

P-2: "...the important thing is matching the personnel... When you find the right match for those kids, and we have it here, you're going to be successful."

P-3 ensured that the teachers' personalities were compatible with their students, and they were well-prepared for the academic and behavioral challenges associated with classroom settings for students with EBD.

P-3: "Sometimes personalities don't always get along, and you have to realize that and be able to make changes when necessary."

P-4 stressed the importance of matching highly-skilled instructors with compatible students with EBD.

P-5 had to make personnel changes to ensure that the teachers were compatible with the students with EBD.

P-5: “I’ve done some changes as far as personnel... to see which ones fit best in certain programs.”

P-6 brought in new teachers to improve the quality of instruction for students with EBD. This personnel change has been attributed to the program’s success.

P-6: “We had to make some personnel changes in the teachers who were teaching these kids.”

The commonalities among the principals’ responses suggest a theme of “teacher selection in programs for students with EBD”. The principals supported their teachers by ensuring that they are appropriately placed in programs for students with EBD. The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Vision, Strategic and Ethical Decision Making, Knowledge Management and Innovation, Managing the Environment, Human Resources, and Interpersonal Relationships. Summarized responses that support this theme can be seen in Table 6.



**Table 6: Principals’ responses supporting teacher selection in programs**

P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
Important to match personnel with students.	Make changes if personalities are not compatible.	Important that students are with the appropriate instructors.	Make changes to ensure that the teachers are the best fit for the programs.	Made personnel changes to who was teaching students with EBD.
Have a background in special education, content knowledge, compassion, patience, flexibility. If not, another placement is appropriate.	Teachers who are chosen are good role models.	Many teachers are multi-certified.		Personnel was a big issue at the school.
If personality is not a match, another position will be found.	Teachers are well prepared to instruct.	If teacher is not a perfect match for the students, the program will not be successful.		Teachers are critical, and have to know what they are doing.
	Teachers are effective disciplinarians, firm but fair.	Teachers understand their students and their unique needs.		Personnel have to know how to work with students with EBD. People who are charismatic and dynamic can help deal with issues students face.

*Identified Commonality #2*

The principals in this study support their teachers of students with EBD by providing them with supplies and resources that can assist with classroom instruction. Five out of six

principals mentioned ways in which they provide support through provision of supplies and resources. P-2 explained that requests for supplies were never turned down.

P-2: "...providing the resources that the teachers need in the program. There has never been a request for something that I have said no to."

P-3 used available funding twice annually in order to obtain whatever supplies teachers of students with EBD requested.

P-3: "...at the beginning of the year, I ask...if there are any supplies or any materials that they may need throughout the year, to go ahead and apprise me of that at the beginning of the year, because that's when the money's fresh, it's there."

P-4 stressed the importance of providing adequate tools for teachers of students with EBD, and ensuring that they have access to the same supplies as other teachers.

P-4: "...making sure that they have all the tools that they need."

P-5 explained that teachers of students with EBD were granted whatever requests for supplies that were made.

P-5: "And anything they ask for I give them."

P-6 provided teachers of students with EBD with whatever supplies they needed to improve the quality of instruction.

P-6: "I give them, literally, anything that they need. If they tell me they need something that is going to improve whatever it is that they are trying to work with, I'm going to find the money somewhere, somehow to get it done."

P-6 also divided funding among teachers of students with EBD to acquire whatever supplies they needed.

P-6: "...the funding that is provided by the district for our special ed programs...I take a portion of it and divide it among the teachers and I say, "What do you need? You have this much money." And they'll tell me what they need."

The commonalities among the responses suggest a theme of "support through provision of supplies and resources". The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Strategic and Ethical Decision Making, and Managing the Environment. Summarized statements that support this theme are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Principals’ responses supporting support through supplies and resources**

P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
Has not denied a request for resources.	Provides money for resources at the beginning of the year.	Makes sure teachers have all the supplies they need.	Provides anything that is asked for.	Gives teachers anything they need.
The word "no" does not exist.	Provides money for resources mid-year.	Makes sure teachers of students with EBD have the same tools and resources as everyone else.	Provides tools and support.	Provides tools and support to do the job right.
If teacher is excited about a resource, it will be provided.		Provides resources so teachers can do their job well.		Divides a portion of available finances among teachers for supplies and resources.

*Identified Commonality #3*

The principals’ support for teachers of students with EBD went beyond the provision of supplies and resources. All six of the principals described providing support through empathy, personal communication, or addressing a teacher’s emotional needs. P-1 described the stresses involved with teaching students with EBD, including the burden of excessive paperwork, and desired to provide extra compensation for the hard work.

P-1: “...paperwork is a very cumbersome thing for a teacher.”

P-1 also supported teachers by being available for personal communication.

P-1: “I think that my role sometimes is to lend an ear to what they have to say... and try to solve those other issues and problems that may arise just from personalities or programs.”

P-2 supported teachers through visitation and being available for personal communication.

P-2: “I go into the EBD classes, so I’m somewhat familiar with the kids, I have an understanding of what their strengths and weaknesses are...”

P-2 also had an empathetic awareness of the challenges of teaching students with EBD, which aided in teacher support.

P-2: “I could fully understand a teacher being in that environment of dealing with those kids, the stress. It’s stressful. It really is. And that’s why it’s important for me, for them to understand that I’m here for a pat on the back. I’m here to let them know that I care about them. I’m here to support them, to give them what they need in order to make their job more livable.”

P-2 used listening skills and humor to help support teachers who may feel occupational stress.

P-2: “...it’s been my experience with people that all they want to do is be heard.”

P-3 supported teachers through visitation and showing interest in what they were doing.

P-3: “...teachers are excited, as well, when you come to their classroom and show interest in what they are doing. So I think that my doing that on a daily basis assists the teachers.”

P-4 understands the challenges that teachers of students with EBD face. P-4 uses an empathetic approach to supporting teachers of students with EBD.

P-4: “...just the high maintenance of the whole thing... It’s just dealing with the issues that come with it. It’s not just the exceptionality itself, but all the other issues that come along with it. It’s not easy... with everything that the child brings to school... I believe that those issues sometimes frustrate.”

P-5 offered moral support through accessibility and an open-door policy.

P-5: “they know I have an open door. My door’s open all day long. They know they can come in here. They all have phones in their classrooms, they know they can dial my extension, I’ll pick it up. I’m there to help them...I’m constantly going down into the classrooms. Just being available for them, letting them know that I’m there if they need me. Moral support.”

P-6 acknowledged the stress that teachers of students with EBD face, and strived to make them feel valued in the school community.

P-6: “Those kids can be tough. They can be tough at times, you know, and it’s a mental stress... having to deal with, you know, trying to keep your cool when the kid is out of control... it’s stressful on them. And there’s a lot of emotions that go into play. And the teachers know it. Teachers invest a lot of emotional equity into these kids. And when one of them has an episode, and is out of control, they take it personally.”

P-6 provided teachers of students with EBD emotional support, personal communication, and availability.

P-6: “I’m a very hands-on principal. I do not like sitting in my office. It’s talking to them, “Are you ok? What do you need?” Making sure they know that I’m supporting them.”

The commonalities among the principals’ responses suggest a theme of “support through empathy, communication, and morale”. The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Managing the Environment, and Interpersonal Relationships. Summarized statements that support this theme are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Principals’ responses supporting support through empathy and communication**

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
Paperwork is cumbersome.	Visits classes, familiar with students’ strengths and weaknesses.	Visits teachers daily to show excitement for what they are doing.	Teachers are frustrated by high maintenance of teaching students with EBD.	Open door policy for teachers. Availability and moral support.	Teachers of students with EBD can become stressed.
Paperwork and IEPs take hours to complete.	Interacts with the students with EBD and their teachers.		Paperwork and documentation stresses.		Helps by providing a human touch.
ESE teachers should receive additional payment.	Open-door policy.		Principal has taught students with EBD, and has empathy for the teachers.		Teachers feel they are valued. Sense of autonomy.
Lend an ear to what teachers have to say.	Understands stress associated with teaching students with EBD.		Is there for the teachers and supports their efforts.		Gives teachers leeway.
Can discuss programmatic, behavioral, or support issues.	Thanks teachers for their service.				Empowers teachers to make decisions. Wants teachers to feel comfortable.
Socialize together.	Hugs teachers. Allows teachers to be heard.				Hands-on principal. There for teachers, talks to them, supports them, provides guidance. Shoulder to cry on.

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
	Has a couch for teachers to relax and vent.				Principal is a cheerleader; an emotional support.

*Identified Commonality #4*

During the interviews, the principals explained that some of the challenges teachers face are due to changes that are made to policies or instructional practices. The principals support teachers of students with EBD by encouraging the use of professional development to enhance classroom instruction. Five of the six principals made meaningful statements that supported this commonality. P-1 provided inservices, forms of professional development, for teachers of students with EBD along with other teachers. Teachers of students with EBD were encouraged to attend content area inservices as well as those targeted specifically on students with EBD.

P-1: “I provide them with inservices...EBD teachers...receive the same inservices as regular ed. teachers and they also receive targeted inservices that pertains to either their subject area, their area of expertise or EBD itself.”

P-2 used professional development to target areas of need on the state-wide standardized test.

P-2: “...our focus on professional development, really, is global, rather than a specific type of PD. It is really driven by FCAT, and it’s driven by the development and implementation of next generation standards in the classroom.”

P-2 also encouraged teachers of students with EBD to attend other professional development activities of interest if they would improve classroom instruction.



P-2: "...if an EBD teacher comes to me and says, "Mr. X, there's a professional development program, there's a piece of software, an event, a conference that I would like to go to", we support them one hundred percent."

P-3 encouraged teachers of students with EBD to attend professional development activities that would be meaningful in their respective setting.

P-3: "...we encourage them to go to any professional develop that is going to assist them with their duties and responsibilities. To include Safe Physical Management, any type of academic professional development, getting our 8<sup>th</sup> grade EBD students ready for the science exam, the writing exam, or anything like that."

P-3 also required teachers of students with EBD to attend content area professional development activities.

P-3: "I provide them with a lot of professional development in their respective areas, subject areas included."

P-5 encouraged teachers to attend district-provided professional development activities.

P-5: "...if there's professional development that's being offered by the district for them to go to, I allow them to go to that."

P-5 also provided professional development at the school site for teachers of students with EBD during early-release days.

P-5: "If I'm able to do a professional development here in school on the early release days, I conduct professional development in smaller groups."

P-6 was satisfied with the level of professional development provided for teachers of students with EBD by the district, but cautioned that professional development activities are only worthwhile when they can be easily used by the classroom teacher.

P-6: “The district is pretty good about providing PD.”

The commonalities among the principals’ responses suggest a theme of “support through professional development”. The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Strategic and Ethical Decision Making, Knowledge Management and Innovation, and Human Resources. Summarized principal responses that support this theme are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: Principals’ responses supporting support through professional development**

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-5	P-6
Teachers of students with EBD attend same in-services as teachers in gen. ed. Settings.	Professional development is driven by standardized testing.	Encourages teachers of students with EBD to attend professional development that will assist with their teaching duties.	Allows teachers to attend district professional development.	District is good about providing professional development.
Teachers of students with EBD attend professional trainings to incorporate gen. ed. curriculum.	Teachers are encouraged to attend professional development that is of interest.	Provides professional development in respective areas and content areas.	Conducts professional development activities on early release days.	Professional development has to be useful and meaningful.
		Some professional development is mandatory.		

### *Identified Commonality #5*

The principals made an effort to include teachers of students with EBD in activities that involved members of the total school faculty. Teachers of EBD were not excluded from general education content area department meetings or other staff activities. Three of the six principals recalled experiences with including teachers of students with EBD in general education department or faculty functions. P-1 made sure that teachers of students with EBD felt a sense of belonging to the general school faculty.

P-1: "...include them in the regular teaching staff and school, to make them feel that they are part of the teaching staff, that they are not separate...they are not alone."

P-2 recognized teachers of students with EBD in full-faculty functions to reduce a sense of isolation and help them feel more involved in the total school community.

P-2: "The unique thing about teaching is that it's a very lonely profession because once you go into that classroom and you close that door, you're doing it alone. And many, many times, there is a sense of isolation. And people need to be recognized, people need to be told that they are appreciated."

P-4 included teachers of students with EBD in general education content-area activities to increase collaboration and access to materials.

P-4: "They meet with their subject area..."

The commonalities among the principals' responses indicate a theme of "support through inclusion of teachers of students with EBD in general faculty functions". The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators

(Appendix D): Managing the Environment, Human Resources, and Interpersonal Relationships.

Summarized statements that support this theme are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10: Principals’ responses supporting including teachers in general faculty functions**

P-1	P-2	P-4
Makes teachers of students with EBD feel a part of the school, not alone. Sense of belonging to department and whole school helps feel like they matter.	Teaching can be lonely. Teachers need to feel that they matter. Recognizes teachers of students with EBD at whole-faculty meetings.	Teachers of students with EBD meet with their subject area.  Teachers of students with EBD meet with their own department.  Make teachers of students with EBD feel a part of the whole-school. Support from colleagues.

*Research Question Two: Summary of Identified Commonalities and Themes*

The themes that emerged from the data suggest that principals who met the qualifications for this study support teachers of students with EBD. The data revealed five themes that address research question two: a) teacher selection in programs for students with EBD, b) support through provision of supplies and resources, c) support through empathy, communication, and morale, d) support through professional development, and e) support through inclusion of teachers of students with EBD in general faculty functions.

*Research Question Two: Outliers*

Analysis of the interview data for research question two revealed five outlying themes. Four of these themes were unique to a particular principal, one was common between two principals, and they all emerged from meaningful statements that took place during the interview.

P-1 attributed the success of programming for students with EBD with the quality of the teachers in the classroom. P-1 believed that teachers, not paraprofessionals or other support personnel, are the catalyst for educational success for students with EBD.

P-1: "I believe that *teachers* should be teaching those students."

P-1 also supported teachers of students with EBD by prioritizing their administrative needs.

P-1: "The only thing that we have done as a team is to offer support for the teachers, so that if the teacher has a referral, or a case that case that needs to be addressed by an administrator, it is addressed, and the child receives the punishment that is merited and warranted. We do not beat around the bush. We do not make the teacher wait or stand in line or go through a hundred different forms to get that done. I think that's how we have reduced some of that stress."

P-4 supported teachers of students with EBD by providing additional personnel support.

P-4: "...we have a behavioral interventionist, and clinician... Our trust counselor has been trained as a clinician. We have a full time EH clinician as well that works very well with the students, does a lot of group interventions and everything."

P-4 and P-5 supported teachers of students with EBD by providing additional time to complete necessary paperwork.

P-4: "We make sure they have subs and the time available. One of the things that we are brainstorming for next year is if I have extra funds to pay them hourly on Saturday to come and do some of that stuff."

P-5: "I provide a lot of support. I know that they need assistance with providing them with time to do the IEPs, with planning... they are asked to do a lot. Just to sit down and

conduct these IEPs takes a lot of time. And them being pulled out of the classroom to do that a lot of times, it's difficult.”

P-5 did not feel that teachers of students with EBD suffered from excessive occupational stress associated with their teaching assignment.

P-5: “[Is there occupational stress?] No, I don't think so. I know that...they all love what they do.”

These outlying themes all address administrative support for teachers of students with EBD, and speak to the essence of the experiences that the respective principals have had.

Research Question Three: How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD: a) allotment of budgetary resource, b) disciplinary assistance?

*Identified Commonality #1*

The principals experienced challenges with regards to finding adequate funding for programs for students with EBD. The district policies that drive funding for students with EBD presented challenges for the principals. Despite difficult financial times, five of the six principals mentioned that finding adequate funding for students with EBD was possible. P-1 was challenged to find funding to support student separation by external and internal behaviors, as well as a low student-to-teacher ratio for students with EBD.

P-1: "...trying to keep the EBD unit intact and separate... budgetary concerns. I have tried to keep the EBD unit separate by grade level, I have tried to keep the EBD unit separate by external and internal behaviors... I believe that joining them does not work."

P-3 found creative ways to arrange scheduling for students with EBD to ensure adequate funding.

P-3: "...in order to get maximum funding, you have to have it coded correctly, but you also have to make sure you have those contact hours built in and we don't, I don't violate any state or district mandates with that."

P-4 used state and federal funding to support students with EBD.

P-4: "...they have their SPED funds and their IDEA funds when we get them, if we get them. And they utilize them for school busses for field trips, to buy resources, little extra

things that they want to get with that money for the kids... they work together as a team and they kind of make those decisions as a team amongst themselves, the teachers do..."

P-5 explained that the allotted budget was tight, and had to be used creatively, especially because funding is tied to inclusion classes and placement for students with EBD.

P-5: "...right now with the budget, your hand is pretty much tied. There's only so much you can do. But we try to manipulate it the best way that we can with regards to the inclusion classes, and setting those up."

P-6 was challenged by the paperwork associated with funding for students with EBD. P-6 has been able to use creative approaches to ensure that students with EBD are adequately funded.

P-6: "...we try to meet all the guidelines and policies, but in all honesty, we don't always... We do the best we can. And usually the biggest issue that we have when it comes to federal and state guidelines and mandates is the paperwork. The paperwork that provides the appropriate funding. That's the biggest issue"

The commonalities among the principals' responses suggest a theme of "budgetary resources for students with EBD". The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Strategic and Ethical Decision Making, Accountability and Assessment, Knowledge Management and Innovation, Managing the Environment, and Human Resources. Summarized principal responses that support this theme are displayed in Table 11.



**Table 11: Principals’ responses supporting budgetary resources for students with EBD**

P-1	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
Despite budgetary concerns, has kept EBD program intact and separated by grade level and behavior type.	Does not violate mandates when coding contact hours to get funding.	SPED funds and IDEA funds provide funding. Team works together to utilize funding.	Budget has created challenges. Have to manipulate.	Paperwork that drives funding is an issue.
Ratios have changed, impacting quality of education.	Creative with scheduling.		Allotted budget is tight.	Has to find gray areas and work with them.
Program should have the correct ratio and number of certified teachers.	Does not circumvent system, but approaches it creatively.		Creativity and thinking outside the box is necessary.	Uses gen. ed. funding for sp. ed. issues when necessary.
Big contribution has been preserving original program despite funding concerns.				

*Identified Commonality #2*

When providing disciplinary assistance for matters involving students with EBD, principals sought to avoid out-of-school suspension whenever possible. All six of the principals in this study used alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with EBD. P-1 relied on personnel resources within the school to address problem behavior exhibited by students with EBD. P-1 did not support out-of-school suspension for students with EBD for behaviors that may be a manifestation of their disability.

P-1: “I have to make sure that the EBD child, also, does not receive ten days for something that does not merit or warrant it.”

P-2 did not want students with EBD to receive out-of-school suspension for behaviors that may be a result of the disability.

P-2: "...we have specific guidelines, as far as our EBD is concerned. We don't have a separate code of student conduct for them, but we do have to make exceptions because sometimes exceptionalities do drive decision-making."

P-2 did not want students to receive excessive disciplinary action for one misbehavior.

P-2: "...my philosophy is that you've got to give kids an opportunity to take ownership of their mistakes, understand that the indiscretion is not a game breaker, but they have to prove to you that they're worthy of making good decisions."

P-3 used indoor-suspension and progressive discipline to reduce behavioral referral rates for students with EBD.

P-3: "... 'OK, he admitted to doing it, so what we'll do is we'll place him in that CSI for a couple of days.' And he'll go over there, he'll do just fine, because we do math in our SCS. That's the intervention that we provide for them. Math, because that's the most challenging."

P-4 utilized other personnel and programs to address problematic behavior for students, including counseling, rather than out-of-school suspension.

P-4: "Well, one of the things I tried to do school-wide, not just EBD, is do more of an exclusion from a class, instead of. If there is one teacher having trouble with a child, I'm not going to punish them all day, and have them missing classes. It's too important to us, and to the child, that they're in their class. We do have an alternative to an outdoor

suspension program, through our Trust Counselor, whose, I've said, is also EBD certified, has gone through the training.”

P-4 used knowledge of students with EBD to inform disciplinary action, seeking alternatives to out-of-school suspension whenever possible.

P-4: “Let’s be real, they’re where they are because of emotional needs. So, we’re really sensitive to that, and we work very closely with those kids in trying to promote positive behavior and the demeanor in which we handle them. May have to be more patient than another student, we may be tolerant of a little bit more. But as far as the data, you don’t want a lot of (suspensions), you don’t want to say that’s what you’re doing with these children. You want to find other means. Otherwise we’re not doing our jobs.”

P-5 attributed the positive behavior support system for reducing the number of out-of-school suspensions for students with EBD.

P-5: “I’m telling you, my suspension rate is really, really good this year. It’s being in programs like this, the positive behavior support. It’s not only behavioral, it’s also academic, to use PBS. It works. That program, it’s shown a lot of really good results.”

P-6 believed that the best thing for students with EBD was to keep them in school, and used alternatives to out-of-school suspension that included indoor suspension, visitation with an administrator, and CSI.

P-6: “...we try to come up with alternatives to the suspension... sending them home doesn’t help much. So we try to keep them in school. We try to do something that will be positive.”

The commonalities among the principals’ responses suggest a theme of “alternatives to out-of-school suspension”. The statements made by the principals are supported by the following competencies as defined and measured on the Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment for Administrators (Appendix D): Strategic and Ethical Decision Making, Accountability and Assessment, Knowledge Management and Innovation, Managing the Environment, and Interpersonal Relationships. Summarized principal responses that support this theme are presented in Table 12.

**Table 12: Principals’ responses supporting alternatives to out-of-school suspension**

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
Does not suspend for behaviors that do not merit it.	Does not have separate code of conduct for students with EBD, but exceptionalities drive decision making.	Students who admit misbehavior may attend CSI for a few days and work on math skills.	Exclusion from one class rather than the entire school-day. Trust counselor used as alternative to suspension.	Low suspension rate due to the positive behavior support system.	Alternatives to suspension are used. Sending them home does not help. Positive approach.
Does not suspend students with EBD for behaviors associated with their disability.	Uses out-of-school suspension as a last resort. Considers disability. Works with family.	Progressive discipline is used.	Alternative to out-of-school suspension is counseling program with parents in the evening.	Uses time out, point system, point store, cooling off period.	When students de-escalate, might spend time with an administrator before returning to class to process a behavioral incident.
Uses a behavior management teacher and counseling	Gives opportunity for student to own up to mistakes, prove worthy of	Very few referrals for students with EBD. Referral	Uses various resource people and a cool-down period.	Students with EBD have lower suspension	

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6
as alternatives to suspension. Is not suspending many students with EBD for behaviors that can be addressed in the classroom.	making good decisions. Students are not totally out of the game for one misbehavior.	rates have dropped.	Students who misbehave in the hallways may be supervised by a paraprofessional until they can behave again. Not placed in CSI. Non-punitive approaches to discipline. Sensitive to emotional needs of students with EBD. Students should not be retained due to behavior. If we do our job, it shouldn't reach that point.	rate than students in gen. ed. setting.	

*Research Question Three: Summary of Identified Commonalities and Themes*

Analysis of the commonalities to the principals' responses to interview guide questions revealed several themes. With regards to a principal's administrative involvement with budgetary issues, principals are able to find adequate funding for students with EBD, despite some challenges. When providing disciplinary assistance for students with EBD, principals seek alternatives to out-of-school suspension whenever possible, often relying on other forms of support to address the behavioral issue.

### *Research Question Three: Outliers*

On the topic of out-of-school suspension for students with EBD, many of the principals mentioned its use as a last-resort option. One principal, P-6, went into greater detail, explaining that out-of-school suspension for students with EBD can be quite prevalent.

P-6: "...we still have a good number of them that do get into trouble...we suspend, and we exclude from school until the parents come in."

This outlying theme was unique to the P-6 interview with regards to the prevalence of out-of-school suspension for students with EBD.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SYNOPSIS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chapter 5 presents a synopsis of the qualitative research that was conducted. Implications for the field that have emerged as a result of this study are included. Additionally, suggestions for future research are presented in this chapter.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of a specific group of school principals with regards to three aspects of education for students with EBD. The following areas are addressed in the research questions for this study: 1) educational programming, 2) teacher support, and 3) administrative support in the areas of discipline and funding. This chapter will provide a summary of the research procedures, summaries of the interviews as they pertain to the research questions, provide implications for the field as well as suggestions for future research.

### **Synopsis of Research**

The researcher used recommendations from school region administrators to identify a set of secondary school principals who met a specific criterion related to their performance evaluation and have programming for students with EBD. An expert panel developed and verified guide questions that were asked of a randomly selected group of the recommended principals. The questions addressed educational matters involving students with EBD. The guide questions addressed three research questions. The researcher conducted six interviews that were transcribed and analyzed using guidelines appropriate for phenomenological data. Per phenomenological analysis guidelines, the researcher identified meaningful statements and

summarized each individual interview. Meaningful statements were verified by the expert panel, and the summaries were returned to the principals for review. The phenomenological analysis included finding commonalities among the combined interviews as they pertain to the specific research questions, as well as any outlying data that had relevance to the study. From the commonalities among the interview data, themes emerged. These themes directly addressed the research questions, and were used to construct a composite summary for each research question in the phenomenological study.

## Summary and Interpretation

### Research Question #1

Research question one addressed the principals' experiences with educational placement and programming for students with EBD. Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan (2008) explain that educational programming and placement for students with EBD needs to take place with consideration of academic factors, social factors, and the interactions between academic and social ability. Upon analysis of the interview data, four themes emerged that addressed research question one.

The first identified theme emerging from the interview data is the principals' use of inclusion for students with EBD. Research exists that supports the use of inclusion as an educational practice used for students with EBD (Kern, Hilt-Panahon, Sokol, 2009; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999; Visser, Cole, & Daniels, 2002). Visser, Cole, & Daniels (2002) argue that inclusion for students with EBD is a process, and is most successful when schools have, among other things, sustained effective leadership. Shapiro, Miller, Sawka,



Gardill, & Handler (1999) found that with proper support, schools were able to maintain and, in some cases, increase the amount of time students with EBD were spending in general education classrooms. Kauffman (1999) argues that while full inclusion for all students with EBD may not be appropriate, research should be conducted to find the point where students can either benefit from placement in a general education classroom or require more intensive services in a more restrictive setting. In this study, all of the principals had experiences with including students with EBD in the general education setting.

The second theme that emerged from interview data was that principals supported providing students with EBD access to the general education curriculum. Despite guidelines in IDEA 2004 for students with disabilities to have access to the general education curriculum, there are challenges to enforcing this policy. Hardman & Dawson (2008) described the difficulty, when using the general education curriculum, in providing accessible materials and assessments, matching instruction with the individual needs of the students, and having enough materials and personnel to accommodate all students. In a study by Jackson & Neel (2006), it was found that many students with EBD do not have access to standards-based curricula and instruction in mathematics. From the interview data, four of the principals described experiences in providing access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD.

The third theme addressed the use of data to inform placement for students with EBD. Kern, Hilt-Panahon, & Sokol (2009) explained that students with EBD are served in a wide variety of settings, including self-contained classrooms and general education classrooms. Due to the wide variety of educational services that students with EBD require, it is important that academic, emotional, social, and behavioral factors are considered when placing students with

EBD in classroom settings. Each of the six principals interviewed in this study discussed experiences with utilizing available data, academic and behavioral, to inform educational placement for students with EBD.

The final theme that emerged from the interview data was the use of a comprehensive positive reinforcement system in programs for students with EBD. Lewis, Jones, Horner, & Sugai (2010) discuss the advantages of providing ample opportunities for students with EBD to demonstrate success and receive positive feedback for appropriate behavior. In some schools, this is incorporated as part of a school wide positive behavioral support system (SWPBS). Other schools may incorporate a positive reinforcement system on a programmatic, classroom, or individual level. Four of the principals in this study shared experiences with the use of a comprehensive positive reinforcement system for students with EBD. One of the principals utilized a SWPBS.

#### *Research Question #1: Discussion of Findings*

Analysis of interview data revealed four themes that support practices that the principals in this study implement to benefit educational programming for students with EBD. The principals ensure that students with EBD are included in general education classrooms. The principals also ensure that all students with EBD have access to the general education curriculum and materials, regardless of educational placement. The principals use available data to inform placement for students with EBD. The principals have in place a positive reinforcement system to address the behavioral needs of students with EBD. These evidence-based practices are supported by research to be considered effective ways to promote educational success for students with EBD.

P-2, P-5, and P-6 discussed having a large inclusion program. The principals celebrated the number of students with EBD who were served in the general education setting. P-5 continued to explain that many of the students with EBD who are served in general education classrooms were demonstrating academic and behavioral success without any additional support. Visser, Cole, & Daniels (2002) explain that inclusion settings for students with EBD are most successful when the school has an established culture of caring, sharing, and learning, with strong effective leadership serving as a catalyst for such a culture. Having met the requirements for this study, the principals' success in providing large-scale inclusion for students with EBD may be attributed to the school-wide culture established by effective leadership, which is supported by the findings of Visser, Cole, & Daniels (2002).

P-1, P-2, and P-4 spoke of a progressive, systematic approach to inclusion for students with EBD. Repeatedly, P-1 indicated that students who "should be" included have that opportunity, and it is done in a progressive fashion. P-4 spoke about giving students with EBD an opportunity to try an inclusion class, and if success is demonstrated, have opportunities for more access to the general education setting. None of the principals spoke of mandatory full-inclusion for students with EBD. All of the principals had more restrictive settings that were used whenever appropriate. This practice is supported by Kauffman (1999), who argued that there is a line between students with EBD who are socially, emotionally, and behaviorally prepared for classrooms in the general education setting, and those who require more restrictive options. Each of the schools in this study offered several placement options for students with EBD, which is supported by Kauffman's suggestion of a "continuum of placements" (Kauffman, 1999).

P-3, P-4, and P-6 had to make changes to the culture of their schools in order to provide more opportunities for inclusion for students with EBD. P-3 described experiences with general education teachers who were reluctant to the idea of educating students with EBD in their classrooms. Some time has passed since P-3 increased inclusion practices, and now teachers in general education classrooms have come to embrace their students with EBD. Heflin & Bullock (1999) describe the resistance to change as it pertains to teachers in general education settings adapting to inclusion practices involving students with EBD. Often times, teachers in general education settings are resistant to inclusion due to a feeling that they are not trained to address the issues they will face with students with EBD, including safety issues, and they will not be able to accommodate varying needs in a large classroom of students (Heflin & Bullock, 1999). This research supports the concerns faced by the principals in this study when including students with EBD in the general education setting. Despite the challenges, however, the principals supported the use of inclusion for students with EBD whenever appropriate. In cases where general education content-area courses were not appropriate for students with EBD, the principals provided access to the general education setting in other ways. P-1 described including students with EBD in elective classes. P-3 included students with EBD in lunch and other school-wide activities with the general education population. P-4 also included students with EBD in school-wide activities and assemblies, striving to prepare them for the “real world”.

Though all students with EBD were not included full-time in general education classes, the principals had experiences with providing students with EBD access to the general education curriculum and materials. P-1, P-4, and P-5 spoke about treating students with EBD, in an academic sense, just the same as the students in the general education setting. P-1 had teachers in

programs for students with EBD who were specially trained to implement the general education curriculum, as well as the specific accommodations required of a classroom for students with EBD. P-4 explained that all of the students had the same supplies and resources, regardless of disability status, and they were all held to the same standards; the curriculum was not “watered down” for students with EBD. P-5 indicated that a stranger walking into the classroom would not even know it was a setting for students with EBD, due to the use of general education curricula and strategies. Hardman & Dawson (2008) discuss that academic expectations for students with disabilities are often lower than their peers without disabilities, resulting in lower academic achievement. Having access to the general education curriculum allows for students with disabilities to receive an education that covers academic content areas more widely and deeply, allowing for problem solving, higher order thinking, and collaborative opportunities (Hardman & Dawson, 2008). This research supports the actions of the principals in this study, providing access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD.

Lane (2007) advocates the use of a multi-faceted approach to analyzing behavioral and academic characteristics of students with EBD to inform placement decisions, with regards to restrictiveness of setting. Lane’s (2007) research supports the practice utilized by all of the principals in this study of using available data to inform placement for students with EBD. P-1 described using data from statewide assessments, district mandated assessments, behavioral progress measures, and other assessments to guide placement for students with EBD. P-2 worked closely with teachers to evaluate student data, looking at a student’s individual strengths and weaknesses to aid placement decisions. P-3 used data to inform placement decisions for all students, not just those with EBD. P-4 used academic and behavioral data to guide placement for

students with EBD. P-5 indicated that all school academic and behavioral programs are driven by available data. P-6 relied on a student's IEP team to utilize available data, academic, behavioral, and social, to inform placement for students with EBD. Once placement had already occurred, P-1, P-2, P-4 , and P-5 continued to monitor student progress, through continual data collection, to ensure that students with EBD were properly placed. These practices are supported by the Lane's (2007) research.

There is abundant research supporting the use of a token economy and positive reinforcement procedures in the classroom as a method of behavior management. Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade (2002) outline practices that support academic and behavioral success for students with EBD, namely the use of a token economy on a programmatic or classroom level. Token economies can vary in detail and execution, however the extrinsic reinforcement for appropriate behavior and successful task completion can be a catalyst for educational and social progress for students with EBD. Cook (1999) describes the use of a token economy with students with disabilities as a motivating factor that can improve student social behavior and academic performance. Nelson (2010) explains that the use of a token economy can lead to an increase in task completion for students. The principals in this study used points-based, positive reinforcement systems and positive behavior support that included the use of a token economy. P-1 referred to this technique as a "points system", and incorporated it on a program-wide level for students with EBD. P-1's token economy system included a point store that allowed students with EBD to receive tangible rewards for the collection of tokens earned by demonstrating appropriate behavior. P-1 made a point to indicate that the points system needed to be enforced with fidelity, as it was a necessary programmatic component for student and program success. P-

3 also used a program-wide point system that was part of a token economy, and addressed several different areas of behavior for students with EBD. P-3 stated that due to the low socio-economic status of the students at the school, the ability to earn tangible reinforcements in a point store was appreciated, and served as a motivating factor. The items in the point store came from donations from the community. P-4 used a point system with a token economy that addressed individualized target behaviors as well as frequent parent communication for students with EBD. Positive reinforcement for students with EBD, according to P-4, was directly related to their performance based on the points system. P-5 utilized a comprehensive school-wide positive behavior support system to promote desired behavior. P-5 lauded the success of the positive behavior support system, indicating that it helped students with EBD make behavioral progress and reduced the number of undesired behavioral incidents.

#### Research Question #2

The principals in this study demonstrated support for teachers of students with EBD in many ways. Analysis of the interview data revealed five themes that address principal support for teachers of students with EBD. In a field that, according to Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, & McHatton (2009), presents overwhelming and demanding pressure on teachers, it is clear that administrative support is paramount to success for teachers of students with EBD. The principals in this study supported teachers by ensuring that they were placed in settings with compatible students. The principals in this study provided teachers of students with EBD supplies and resources so that they could effectively utilize curricular and behavior modification programs. Additionally, the principals in this study provided emotional support for teachers of students with EBD through frequent and open communication. Professional development opportunities were

also supplied and encouraged by the principals in this study so that teachers of students with EBD would be better prepared to face the challenges associated with high-quality instruction in a classroom for students with EBD. In addition to including students with EBD in general education settings, as identified in research question one, the principals in this study similarly included teachers of students with EBD as contributing members of the general school faculty, including during content-area functions.

### *Research Question #2: Discussion of Findings*

Five of the principals in this study described the importance of placing the right teachers into classrooms of students with EBD. It was critical, from the principals' point of view to match students with EBD with teachers who have compatible personalities. In an area where teacher turnover is common, job satisfaction can be related to teacher retention. The research of Prather-Jones (2010) supports of this sentiment. Teachers of students with EBD are more likely to remain in the profession if they have personality traits that support flexibility, interest in teaching students with EBD, and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, teachers of students with EBD are more likely to be retained if they can acquire personality traits that allow them to disassociate job stresses in the classroom with personal feelings (Prather-Jones, 2010). The principals in this study appointed teachers in programs for students with EBD in a manner supported by this research. P-2 stressed the importance of matching personnel with compatible students, and only selected teachers for students with EBD who had a background in special education, strong content knowledge, and personality traits that encouraged flexibility, patience, and compassion. Teachers who did not have these traits were not placed in settings with students with EBD. P-3 selected teachers who had management styles that were firm, but fair, and were good role



models. P-3 also made sure that teachers of students with EBD were placed in compatible settings. P-3, P-5, and P-6 had to make changes, upon reflection, to ensure the compatibility of the teacher-student relationship in classrooms for students with EBD. P-4 indicated that if the teachers were not placed appropriately, with compatible students, the programming for students with EBD would not be successful. Supported by the research of Prather-Jones (2010), P-4 selected teachers for students with EBD who understood their students, and were sensitive to their unique needs. P-6 selected teachers for students with EBD who had personality characteristics that made them charismatic and dynamic, and a firm understanding of how to work specifically with students with EBD. The experiences of selecting the right teachers for classrooms with students with EBD shared by the principals in this study are supported by the research of Prather-Jones (2010).

The supportive practices of school principals have been analyzed by research to determine effective forms of administrative leadership (May & Supovitz, 2011). In a research synthesis conducted by Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003), 21 leadership qualities were identified as effective means for school principals to demonstrate teacher support, ultimately resulting in student success. Among these leadership traits was the provision of supplies and materials. Kern, Hilt-Panahon, and Sokol (2009) analyzed academic practices in classrooms for students with EBD, and found that accommodations were not being made to address individual learning needs. The authors noted “scarce resources”, and unsuccessful use of whole-class instruction, taking place with a lack of additional supports. The principals in this study, in contrast, encouraged teachers to acquire any additional supplies and materials necessary to improve or individualize classroom instruction for students with EBD. The principals allowed

their teachers the freedom to select which materials and supplies would most benefit their students, and the financial resources to acquire them. P-2, P-5, and P-6 indicated that they would not deny any request for materials from a teacher of students with EBD, with one principal indicating that the word “no” does not exist when it comes to that form of teacher support. P-3 made funds available to teachers of students with EBD twice annually, allowing time for teachers to examine which materials could best accommodate their students. P-4 and P-6 indicated that the importance of providing support through supplies and materials was to ensure that the teacher’s job was being done with maximum effectiveness. The effective practice of teacher support through provision of materials and supplies so that students will succeed, as experienced by the principals in this study, is supported by the research of Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003).

The principals in this study had an empathetic awareness of the challenges faced by teachers of students with EBD, and therefore provided them emotional support. Donaldson, Marnik, Mackenzie & Ackerman (2009) found that effective principals prioritized the relationships they established within their school community, faculty, and staff. A principal’s ultimate success, according to these researchers, relied on the supportive personal relationships they established with the school’s personnel. According to Haberman (1999), the most effective principals are those who, among other things, motivate and support their teachers. Research shows that school principals acknowledge the complex challenges associated with meeting the educational and behavioral needs of students with EBD (Knuth, Beaudoin, & Benner, 2007). Among the challenges faced by teachers of students with EBD, George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick (1995) explain that a large amount of occupational stress stems from excessive

paperwork and a feeling of a lack of administrative support. The principals in this study did acknowledge stress associated with excessive paperwork, however, a lack of administrative support for teachers of students with EBD was not evident; quite to the contrary, actually.

Empathetic support was apparent from the experiences of P-4, who had spent time as a classroom teacher for students with EBD prior to becoming a school principal. P-4 could relate to the stress that teachers of students with EBD felt with regards to paperwork and the high-maintenance nature of the classroom setting. P-1, P-2, and P-6 also described the stress that teachers of students with EBD face. They did not place the blame for the stress on the teachers, but attributed it to excessive paperwork and the realities of teaching students with EBD. P-4 explained that there are many opportunities to provide teacher support through availability and openness. P-3 supported teachers by visiting classrooms to show excitement for what the teachers were doing, thereby motivating them. P-1, P-2, P-4, P-5, and P-6 were available to provide emotional support for their teachers of students with EBD at all times, with P-2 and P-5 mentioning an “open-door” policy with regards to availability to teachers. P-1 had experiences supporting teachers in social settings, P-2 was there to hug teachers of students with EBD, while P-6 was a self-described cheerleader, and a shoulder to cry on for those teachers. All of the principals in this study provided emotional support for their teachers of students with EBD.

In addition to material and emotional support, the principals in this study supported teachers of students with EBD by encouraging and providing opportunities for professional development. In the identification of 21 effective administrative supports, Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003) list the provision of professional development for teachers as a way to enhance student performance. Sutherland, Denny, & Gunter (2005) found that many teachers of students

with EBD feel unprepared for the challenges they will face in the classroom. The researchers categorized the professional development needs of teachers of students with EBD as “significant”, and urged that school districts provide ample opportunities to address this deficiency. In an analysis of research literature, Billingsly (2004) found that special education teachers can be more effective when school administration focuses on, among other things, professional development opportunities. The principals in this study supported teachers of students with EBD by encouraging and providing professional development inservices and workshops. P-1 used professional development to assist teachers of students with EBD with incorporating the general education curriculum in a specialized setting. Teachers of students with EBD and teachers in the general education classroom setting attended professional development activities together to learn the appropriate accommodations to meet the educational needs of students with EBD, who are being taught the general education curriculum. P-2 encouraged teachers of students with EBD to attend professional development activities that were of interest, much of which was geared to success on the statewide standardized assessment. P-3 stated that some professional development activities were mandated by the school district, but teachers of students with EBD were also encouraged to attend activities that would help improve their classroom instruction. P-3 supported teachers of students with EBD by encouraging them to attend professional development activities that were geared towards students with EBD, and also in-services geared towards content-area instruction. In addition to attending professional development sessions provided by the school district, P-5 encouraged teachers of students with EBD to conduct professional development activities at the school site. P-6 lauded the professional development opportunities provided by the school district, and noted that in order to

be worthwhile, the content learned in the session has to be meaningful and realistic to the teachers in attendance. The principals in this study supported teachers of students with EBD by providing them with opportunities for professional development. This practice is supported by the research of Billingsly (2004), Sutherland, Denny, & Gunter (2005), and Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003).

The principals in this study supported teachers of students with EBD by including them as valued members of the general school faculty. Henley, Milligan, McBride, Neal, Nichols, & Singleton (2010) explain that, oftentimes, teachers in special education settings have a sense of isolation from the general school staff. They claim that special educators have difficulty feeling that they are active and participating members of a school's faculty. The researchers suggest that a way to combat this problem is for school districts and school leaders to take a commanding role to eliminate that stigma, and realize that special educators are an integral part of a school's functioning (Henley, et al., 2010). In this study, it was apparent that the principals did value the contributions of teachers of students with EBD, and included them as contributing members of the general school community. P-1 took special care to ensure that teachers of students with EBD did not feel that they were alone. P-1 explained that fostering a sense of involvement within their department and within the general school faculty helped teachers of students with EBD feel that they matter. P-2 understood the sense of isolation that teachers of students with EBD often feel, and spoke of the importance of making those teachers feel that they matter to the functioning of the school. P-2 mindfully acknowledged teachers of students with EBD at full-faculty functions and recognized their accomplishments. P-4 ensured that teachers of students with EBD had opportunities to meet not only with their special education department, but also with content area

teachers in the general education setting so they would not feel isolated from their colleagues. P-4 explained that it was important for teachers of students with EBD to feel that they are an important part of the school faculty. The principals in this study supported teachers of students with EBD by including them as contributing members of the general school faculty.

### Research Question #3

Two administrative areas that can greatly impact programming for students with EBD are allotting budgetary resources for educational programming and providing disciplinary support whenever behavioral issues arise. Cavanagh (2011) explains that the recent recession has resulted in budgetary constraints for educational programs nationwide. With budgets greatly reduced, school leaders have had to make difficult decisions with regards to the allotment of financial resources. In the area of providing disciplinary support, schools are using out-of-school suspension at an increasing rate, reducing the amount of time spent in class with little long-term correction of misbehavior (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). Through analysis of the interview data from this study, two themes emerged with regards to the administrative practices of budgetary allotment for students with EBD and disciplinary support for students with EBD. The principals in this study, acknowledging the challenges associated with budgetary allotment as they involve programming for students with EBD, often have to find creative means to provide adequate resources. Also, the principals in this study use alternatives to out-of-school suspension as much as possible for students with EBD.

### *Discussion of Findings: Research Question #3*

Cavanagh (2011) and Sausner (2005) blame the recent economic downturn for a shortfall in school budgeting, causing school administrators to make difficult decisions with regards to the funding of specific school-based programs. With school personnel making up such a large portion of a schools allotted budget, school principals have had to find creative ways to budget teacher placement with minimal risk to the quality of services (Sausner, 2005). The principals in this study have experienced troubles associated with reduced budgets, and have had to use creative means to manipulate their budget to accommodate educational programming for students with EBD. P-1 took pride in the ability to maintain the same level of services for students with EBD despite budgetary restrictions, asserting that the most important thing was to keep an appropriate ratio of teachers to students with EBD. P-1 disagreed with changes to student to teacher ratio guidelines for students with EBD, a cost-saving measure, and fought to maintain a lower ratio that served the students best. P-3 explained that while no rules were violated with regards to the budget for students with EBD, creative approaches were necessary in order to maintain a level of services that would be educationally beneficial. P-4 utilized funding from multiple sources, and used a team-based approach to spending the funds to best serve students with EBD. P-5 acknowledged that the school budget was tight, and was a challenge to work with. P-5 explained that creative means were necessary, and thinking outside the box was needed in order to provide the appropriate services for students with EBD. P-6 described the paperwork associated with educational funding for students with EBD, and while it presented a challenge, P-6 was able to find “gray areas” that could be exploited to ensure proper services for students with EBD. P-6 also stated that, if necessary, funding for general education classrooms

could be used for programs for students with EBD. The budgetary challenges experienced by the principals in this study, as well as the creative means of funding programming for students with EBD, are supported by the research of Cavanagh (2011) and Sausner (2005).

Students with EBD are disciplined using out-of-school suspension and expulsion at a greater rate than their peers in general education (Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, & Young, 2008). Research suggests that the utilization of a positive behavior support system for students with EBD, one targeted to the student's specific behavioral issues, can minimize problem behavior, therefore reducing the need for more punitive action (Heineman, Dunlap, & Kincaid, 2005). Dupper, Theriot, & Craun (2009) explain that the use of out-of-school suspension for students with EBD does little to correct misbehavior in the long-term, and harms educational progress by reducing a student's instructional time in class. The principals in this study sought to avoid out-of-school suspension for students with EBD whenever possible, often using alternative, positive disciplinary measures instead.

P-1 did not use out-of-school suspension for students with EBD for behaviors that were a manifestation of a student's disability, or did not merit such punishment. Instead, P-1 relied on a behavior management teacher, clinician, or other support personnel to provide counseling for a student with EBD to correct misbehavior. P-1 also utilized classroom and program based consequences to address problem behavior for students with EBD. P-2 made disciplinary decisions for students with EBD with the realities of the disability in mind. Students with EBD were given opportunities to atone for their misbehavior, make corrections, and move forward. P-2 worked with families of students with EBD to find appropriate alternatives to out-of-school suspension that still addressed the misbehavior. P-2 explained that out-of-school suspension was



only used as a last resort. P-3 used a progressive discipline system for students with EBD that allowed students to speak with support personnel about misbehavior, or be briefly excluded from a class in school in a specialized setting, rather than being sent home. P-4 also had a school based exclusionary system that allowed students to only be excluded for a prescribed number of class periods, rather than serving an out-of-school suspension. For the programs for students with EBD, P-4 was able to reduce school-based privileges when misbehavior occurred, instead of resorting to a suspension. P-5 touted the benefits of a positive behavior support system in reducing the incidences of misbehavior for students with EBD. P-5 encouraged the use of a cooling off period when students with EBD were beginning to exhibit problem behavior, thereby extinguishing a potentially explosive behavioral event. P-5 attributed a reduction in the amount of out-of-school suspension for students with EBD to the implementation of a school wide positive behavioral support system. P-6 also used alternatives to out-of-school suspension, stating that proactive disciplinary measures worked much better than punitive ones. P-6 explained that sending students with EBD home as a punishment was not an effective strategy. P-6 also spent time with students with EBD who were exhibiting problem behavior, discussing and processing the incident with them before sending them back to class. Research data explains that students with EBD are suspended at a high rate (Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, & Young, 2008), and out-of-school suspension is not an effective means to correct problem behavior (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). The principals in this study avoided the use of out-of-school suspension as much as possible, utilizing, instead, more positive interventions that kept students with EBD in school.

## Evidence Based Practices

The following evidence based practices are supported by the themes that have emerged from this study: functional behavioral assessment, behavior support plan, and school-wide positive behavior support (Stormont, Reinke, & Herman, 2011). The themes of inclusion for students with EBD, data informed placement for students with EBD, comprehensive positive behavior support for students with EBD, and alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with EBD are all supported by these evidence based practices. Furthermore, the themes regarding principal support for teachers of students with EBD can be specifically tailored to address the target and alternative behaviors as outlined in a functional behavioral assessment and behavior support plan.

The theme most directly tied to evidence based practices for students with EBD is providing a comprehensive positive behavioral support system. One principal in this study was implementing such a system at the school-wide level. Desired behaviors were explicitly taught, and problem behavior was addressed at the school-wide, classroom, and individual levels, as supported by Sugai & Horner (2002). Warren, et al. (2006) found that the implementation of a school-wide positive behavior support system can lead to academic and behavioral success for all students.

## Implications for Educational Policy and Practice

Based on the data gathered from interviews with select principals, suggestions can be made regarding policy and practice concerning the education of students with EBD. The focus of the current research has been on the role of the principal in facilitating successful programs for students with EBD, providing support for teachers of students with EBD, and making

administrative decisions concerning students with EBD. Because all of these implications directly effect the role of a school principal, suggestions for policy and practice will be presented in one group. The suggestions come from a greater understanding of the lived experiences of a select group of principals who provide educational programming for students with EBD.

- Principals should ensure that students with EBD are provided access to the general education setting as much as possible. This access may come from inclusion in a general educational class with additional support and accommodations, through participation in hallway transitions, lunch with the general education population, or in whole-school assemblies and activities.
- Principals should ensure that students with EBD have access to the appropriate grade-level general education curriculum in their core-content classes, including supplemental supplies and resources.
- Principals should ensure that educational placement decisions regarding students with EBD are being made with fidelity, using available academic and behavioral data so that students with EBD are receiving their education in the least restrictive environment.
- Principals should adopt and implement comprehensive positive behavioral support systems that include a token economy as a means to reinforce appropriate behavior for students with EBD. Targeted, individualized positive behavioral interventions can take place in any setting, including a self-contained classroom or in an inclusion class in the general education setting.
- Principals should match students with EBD with teachers who have personality traits that will ensure student success and limit occupational stress. Teachers who are not a good

match for addressing the varied needs of students with EBD should not be placed in those classroom settings.

- Principals should ensure that teachers of students with EBD have access, through financial support, to adequate supplies and materials to accommodate their students' educational needs and enhance instruction.
- Principals should communicate frequently and openly with teachers of students with EBD. Principals should lend teachers an empathetic ear and offer emotional support for the challenges associated with the profession. This can include having an open-door policy for teachers, or classroom visitation to praise the positive educational practices that are taking place.
- Principals should allow and encourage teachers of students with EBD to capitalize on professional development opportunities that can positively impact classroom instruction or behavior management.
- Professional development activities should be available to school principals and other administrators to address the themes from this study.
- Principals should include teachers of students with EBD in faculty functions and meetings that are geared towards teachers in general education settings. Principals should recognize the valuable contributions teachers of students with EBD make to the overall functioning of a school.
- Principals should analyze the allotted school budget and make creative decisions, within legal parameters, to ensure that students with EBD are properly served in an appropriate classroom setting.

- Principals should ensure that alternatives to out-of-school suspension are being used for students with EBD. While some behaviors may warrant severe punishment, principals should utilize support personnel, progressive discipline, and classroom consequences as ways to address problem behavior that do not result in removing the student from school.

### Recommendations for Future Research

With the insight gained from the lived experiences of select school principals, and with greater knowledge of the research process, the following recommendations for future research are made.

- Compare principals' perspectives with the perspectives of teachers of students with EBD regarding the level of administrative support provided at a school.
- Construct a survey that will rate administrative support for educational programming for students with EBD. Survey analysis will compare the responses of teachers of students with EBD, parents of students with EBD, and administrators at schools that provide programming for students with EBD.
- Interview school principals, special education department leaders, and teachers of students with EBD together to explore their experiences in providing educational programming for students with EBD.

The challenges associated with educational programming for students with EBD are great in scope. Rather than focusing on the high rates of negative educational outcomes, future research should identify those practices that have potential for promoting academic, social, and behavioral success for students with EBD. By including the school principal, teachers, students, parents, and other support personnel, researchers have access to a wide range of experiences that

can be examined. Analysis of effective interventions and accommodations can lead to meaningful change that will improve the quality of educational services provided for students with EBD.

**APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FROM  
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Thomas S. Uhle

Date: December 15, 2010

Dear Researcher:

On 12/15/2010, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Application Form  
Project Title: Principals who Exceed District Standards: Improving Outcomes  
for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities  
Investigator: Thomas S. Uhle  
IRB Number: SBE-10-07280  
Funding Agency: None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 12/15/2010 04:52:19 PM EST

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Turchin".

IRB Coordinator



**APPENDIX B: RESEARCH APPROVAL FROM XXX PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



# Miami-Dade County Public Schools

*giving our students the world*

**Superintendent of Schools**  
Alberto M. Carvalho

**Office of Program Evaluation**  
Jerome L. Levitt

**Miami-Dade County School Board**

Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair  
Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Vice Chair  
Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall  
Carlos L. Curbelo  
Renier Diaz de la Portilla  
Dr. Wilbert "Tee" Holloway  
Dr. Martin Karp  
Dr. Marta Pérez  
Raquel A. Regalado

## EXPEDITED - APPROVAL

January 10, 2011

Mr. Thomas Uhle  
15400 S.W. 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33157

Dear Mr. Uhle:

I am pleased to inform you that the Research Review Committee (RRC) of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) has granted you a approval for your request to conduct the study: "Principals Who Exceed District Standards: Improving Educational Outcomes for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities" in order to fulfill the requirements of your Dissertation at the University of Central Florida.

The approval is granted with the following conditions:

1. Participation of the schools targeted in this study is at the discretion of each principal. Please note that even with the approval of the RRC, it is still the responsibility of the Principal as the gatekeeper of the school to decide whether to participate or not. As stated in the Board rule, *"... the principal of the individual school has the privilege of deciding if RRC-approved research will be conducted within his/her school."* A copy of this approval letter must be presented to the principal.
2. The participation of all subjects is **voluntary**.
3. The anonymity and/or confidentiality of all subjects must be assured.
4. The study will involve approximately 6 principals in MDCPS Schools.
5. Disruption of the school's routine by the data collection activities of the study must be kept at a minimum. Data collection activities must not interfere with the district's testing schedule.
6. ALL research activities must be conducted with the knowledge and approval of the Principal. All efforts should be made to minimize any negative impact on the learning environment.

**It should be emphasized that the approval of the Research Review Committee does not constitute an endorsement of the study. It is simply a permission to request the voluntary cooperation in the study of individuals associated with MDCPS.**

Office of Program Evaluation • 1500 Biscayne Boulevard • Suite 224 • Miami, FL 33132  
305-995-7529 • 305-995-2691 (FAX) • [www.dadeschools.net](http://www.dadeschools.net)

It is your responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed in requesting an individual's cooperation, and that all aspects of the study are conducted in a professional manner. With regard to the latter, make certain that all documents and instruments distributed within MDCPS as a part of the study are carefully edited.

The approval number for your study is **1699**. This number should be used in all communications to clearly identify the study as approved by the Research Review Committee. The approval expires on **June 30, 2011**. During the approval period, the study must adhere to the design, procedures and instruments which were submitted to the Research Review Committee.

Finally, as indicated in your application, please submit to the RRC an abstract of the research findings by **July, 2011**.

**If there are any changes in the study as it relates to MDCPS, the RRC must be notified in writing. Substantial changes may necessitate resubmission of the request. Failure to notify me of such a change may result in the cancellation of the approval.**

If you have any questions, please call me at 305-995-7529. On behalf of the Research Review Committee, I want to wish you every success with your study.

Sincerely,



Tarek Chebbi, Ed. D.  
Chairperson  
Research Review Committee

TC:bf

APPROVAL NUMBER: **1699**

APPROVAL EXPIRES: **06/30/2011**

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***Note: The researcher named in this letter of approval will be solely responsible and strictly accountable for any deviation from or failure to follow the research study as approved by the RRC. M-DCPS will NOT be held responsible for any claim and/or damage resulting from conducting this study.***

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## **APPENDIX C: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GUIDE QUESTIONS**

## Research Questions and Guide Questions

### **Research Question One:**

1. How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

### *Guiding Questions:*

- 1.1 What is your philosophy of education as it relates to programming for students with EBD?
- 1.2 How have you used programmatic data, behavioral and academic, to ensure that your programs for students with EBD are successful?
- 1.3 How is progress measured for the programs for students with EBD at your school?
- 1.4 How would you describe the programs that your school provides for students with EBD?
- 1.4 What practices have you implemented with your programs for students with EBD that have contributed to their success?
- 1.5 What changes have you had to make to improve the quality of the programs for students with EBD at your school, and what prompted you to make those changes?
- 1.6 With regards to your programs for students with EBD, what does the data tell you about disciplinary referral rates and out of school suspensions, and how has this data informed the administrative practices for the programs?
- 1.7 On a program level, what has been the most important thing you have done to impact the quality of educational programming for students with EBD, as a school principal?

1.8 There are many district mandates, federal guidelines and policies with regards to students with EBD that do not allow much flexibility in educational programming. How does that impact the way you serve students with EBD?

1.9 How would you characterize your contribution to programs for students with EBD since you have been at your school?

**Research Question Two:**

2. How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

2.1 In what ways would you describe the teacher's role in educating students with EBD?

2.2 What types of support do you, as an administrator, provide your teachers who work with students with EBD?

2.3 Do you feel that your teachers who work with students with EBD suffer from occupational stress?

2.3.1 If not, what do you do as a principal to eliminate occupational stress for teachers of students with EBD?

2.3.2 If so, what are the causes of occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?

2.3.3 If so, what do you do, as a principal, to reduce occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?

2.4 What types of support are necessary to work with students with EBD as it pertains

to (teacher retention, job satisfaction, occupational stress)?

2.5 What practices have been most effective in supporting teachers in programs for students with EBD?

2.5 How do you use professional development to ensure that teachers of students with EBD are prepared for the challenges they will face?

2.6 How would you describe the level of teacher preparation for newly hired teachers in classrooms for students with EBD, and what do you do about it?

**Research Question Three:**

3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:

a. Allotment of budgetary resources

b. Disciplinary assistance

*Guiding Questions:*

3.1 How do you ensure that your students with EBD are being served in the least restrictive environment?

3.2 How do you use data to guide the placement of students with EBD?

3.3 What behavior modification techniques do you use that are effective in maximizing behavioral and academic success for students with EBD?

3.4 What is your role in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary interventions are used for students with EBD?

3.5 How do you ensure access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD?

3.6 How do you allot budgetary resources so that they may impact students with EBD?

3.7 Beyond administrative support, what is your role in assisting teachers of students with EBD?



**APPENDIX D: MANAGERIAL EXEMPT PERSONNEL PERFORMANCE  
MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT FOR ADMINISTRATORS**



**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Managerial Exempt Personnel (MEP)  
Performance Management Assessment for Administrators**

Mid-Year Assessment Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_       End-of-Year Assessment Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Assessee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessee's Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Location Name/Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor's Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Period Covered: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Assignment:**    School Site       Non-School Site

**PLANNING PHASE**

Planning Phase Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessee/Assessor Agreement on:  
 Key Performance Targets    Administrative Competencies    Professional Growth Targets

**MID-YEAR ASSESSMENT STATUS**

On-Target to Meet Expected Outcomes    Additional Assistance/Resources Required to Meet Expected Outcomes  
 Intervention Status

**END-OF-YEAR OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

Total Weighted Rating combines the Administrative Competency Score, including the Key Performance Targets, and the Professional Growth Activity Score. Multiply the "Score" by the "Weight" to compute the Overall Performance Assessment Total.

Component	Score	Weight	Weighted Assessment
<b>MEP Administrative Competencies Points (Including Key Performance Targets)</b>		<b>90%</b>	
<b>Professional Growth Activities Points</b>		<b>10%</b>	
<b>PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TOTAL</b>			

<input type="checkbox"/> Substantially Exceeds Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standards*
96 and Above	95 – 86	85 – 68	67 and Below

\*If an employee "Does Not Meet Standards," please modify *Component 2: Professional Growth for Administrators* to include specific intervention strategies that address identified areas to be strengthened.

**Component 1: Definitions of MEP Administrative Competencies**  
Performance Assessment Weight 90%

The following eight competencies for schoolsite and non-schoolsite MEP administrators are aligned with best practice benchmarks and include competencies identified as critical for M-DCPS to achieve the goals outlined in the District's Strategic Plan. Please use the definitions for each of the competencies as a guide when forming your assessment of the assessee.

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>I. Vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and disposition to develop, articulate and implement a vision that is shared and supported by the department/school and the community</li> </ul>
<b>II. Strategic and Ethical Decision Making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans effectively, uses critical thinking and problem solving techniques, and collects and analyzes data for continuous improvement</li> <li>• Provides and supports an effective instructional/organizational program and applies best practices</li> <li>• Understands and responds appropriately given economic, social, and organizational contexts in order to achieve results-oriented performance</li> <li>• Ensures that decisions and actions conform to the District's moral, ethical, and professional principles</li> </ul>
<b>III. Accountability and Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively uses data and feedback measures to make decisions</li> </ul>
<b>IV. Knowledge Management and Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses explicit (recorded) and tacit (personal know-how) knowledge to encourage positive results</li> <li>• Anticipates future demands and circumstances; such as stakeholders' expectations, new organizational opportunities, employee hiring needs and changes in educational requirements and instructional approaches</li> </ul>
<b>V. Managing the Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapts behavior to the situation and demonstrates flexibility in responding to the needs of all stakeholders</li> <li>• Promotes a positive learning environment</li> <li>• Manages the organization, operations, facilities and resources in ways that maximize the use of resources and promotes a safe, efficient, legal, and effective environment</li> <li>• Understands diversity as it applies to learning theory and a productive climate for faculty, student, support staff and community interaction</li> <li>• Understands, responds to, and influences professional, political, social, economic, legal, and cultural relationships</li> </ul>
<b>VI. Human Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruits, selects, develops, and retains high-performing personnel</li> <li>• Designs and implements comprehensive individualized professional growth plans</li> </ul>
<b>VII. Interpersonal Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fosters and maintains mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders</li> <li>• Strives to enhance understanding and mutual respect</li> <li>• Acknowledges and responds to needs of others</li> <li>• Manages disagreements and builds consensus</li> </ul>
<b>VIII. Community and Stakeholder Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly collaborates and communicates with families, businesses, and community members around District/school priorities</li> <li>• Responds to diverse community interests and needs</li> </ul>

### **Component 1: Administrative Competencies Key Performance Targets**

*Key Performance Targets are measurable indicators that determine if a project, activity, initiative, program, etc. has the effect of improving performance and/or adding value to stated goals or objectives. The key performance targets should be taken from the Superintendent's Goals; Key Performance Indicators; School Improvement Plans or Department/Function Plans, if applicable.*

**Directions:** Identify and briefly describe at least three major performance targets to be accomplished during this year.

1.

2.

3.

**Component 1: MEP Administrative Competencies (Performance Assessment Weight 90%)**

Mid-Year     End-of-Year

**Directions:** Rate the behavior of the administrator on the eight M-DCPS Administrative Competencies identified below. Mid-Year requires a status indicator of "+" if progress is being made or a "-" if inadequate progress is made. Inadequate progress indicators must be accompanied by a comment.

- 5 = *Teaches/Mentors Others:* Has gained mastery and teaches others how to apply skill
- 4 = *Demonstrates Mastery:* Habitually employs skill
- 3 = *Demonstrates Proficiency:* Has learned skill, but does not routinely apply skill
- 2 = *Early Stages of Development:* Is learning both skill and application of skill
- 1 = *Does Not Meet Standards:* Not meeting performance targets as outlined on the performance targets, administrative competencies, and/or professional growth targets

Competency	Teaches/ Mentors Others	Demonstrates Mastery	Demonstrates Proficiency	Early Stages of Development	Does Not Meet Standards
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>I. Vision</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Articulates and/or garners support for a clear vision for the school/department					
Accepts responsibility for results and decisions					
<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>II. Strategic and Ethical Decision Making</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Develops a plan for the school/department that is tied to the vision					
Efficiently implements work plans/operational plans to accomplish plan, meeting all deadlines					
Effectively identifies and solves problems					
Delegates tasks clearly and appropriately to accomplish goals. Allows enough autonomy while providing enough guidance					
Effectively makes ad hoc decisions, as needed, that contribute to student learning gains and operational effectiveness and efficiency while adhering to District's ethical standards					
<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>III. Accountability and Assessment</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Uses appropriate diagnostic tools to identify, apply, and assess instructional/organizational improvements					
Monitors instructional/organizational programs, activities, materials and resources on a continuous basis and makes adjustments as needed					
Is comfortable and savvy using technology to support the use of data to improve school/department performance					
<b>Comments:</b>					
Subtotal on this page:					0.00

Competency	Teaches/ Mentors Others	Demonstrates Mastery	Demonstrates Proficiency	Early Stages of Development	Does Not Meet Standards
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>IV. Knowledge Management and Innovation</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Identifies best practices to promote student achievement or organizational improvement					
Explicitly shares knowledge with staff to encourage positive school/organizational results					
<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>V. Managing the Environment</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Allocates resources according to school/departmental priorities					
Monitors and reports on major sources of fiscal and non-fiscal resources for the school/department, including business and community resources					
Communicates timely and appropriately with supervisor on major issues, problems, and happenings within the environment					
<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>VI. Human Resources</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Recruits, hires, and retains a high-performing, qualified, and diverse staff					
Develops and supports a comprehensive professional growth plan for all direct reports					
Motivates staff effectively and fosters a collaborative work environment so that collective talents are maximized					
Uses flexibility and appropriate supervisory models to maximize each staff's effectiveness					
<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>VII. Interpersonal Relationships</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Communicates in an open, honest and genuine way with all stakeholders					
Develops and maintains an organizational climate conducive to learning and open to discussion and change					
Fosters mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders					
<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>VIII. Community and Stakeholder Partnerships</b>					
<b>Mid-Year Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> +	<input type="checkbox"/> -			
Mobilizes community resources to support District/school strategic plan					
Shows sensitivity to and communicates with families, businesses, and community members in a timely and effective manner					
Seeks and recognizes allies in the public arena and garners explicit support from those allies					
<b>Comments:</b>					
Subtotal on this page:					0.00
<b>Total Administrative Competencies Points:</b>					0.00
<i>Subtotal on Page 4 + Subtotal on Page 5</i>					
	Substantially Exceeds Standards	Exceeds Standards	Meets Standards	Does Not Meet Standards	
<i>Overall Administrative Competency Score</i>	96 and Above	95 – 86	85 – 68	67 and Below	

**Component 2: Professional Growth for Administrators** (Performance Assessment Weight 10%)

Planning (Beginning of Assessment Period)
  Mid-Year (Review of Progress)
  End-of-Year (Overall Final Evaluation)

**SETTING OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH TARGETS** (TO BE COMPLETED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR)

**Directions:** Use this section to plan the assessee's professional growth activities. Plan targets on which the assessee should focus by looking at the strategic initiatives for the school/department and the assessee's skills against those initiatives. Make every effort to set targets that will be attainable within one school/fiscal year. There should be at least one school/departmental/unit goal and one individual/professional growth goal.

**PROFESSIONAL GROWTH TARGETS**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Professional Growth Target	Key Performance Target or Administrative Competency that will be Impacted	Strategies for Attaining Growth Target	Measurable By (Expected Outcomes)	Completion Date

Signature for Planning Phase:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assessee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assessor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Component 2: Professional Growth for Administrators (continued)**

Mid-Year

*(Review Progress to Date)*

End-of-Year

*(Determine Overall Impact of Professional Growth Activities)*

**EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH (TO BE COMPLETED MID-YEAR AND END-OF-YEAR)**

**Directions:** Use this section to assess the assessee's professional growth activities. In an effort to foster long-term change, life-long learning, and continuous improvement, the reflective process is critical; therefore, the use of guiding questions should assist individuals in integrating ideas for bringing about long-term improved performance in the workplace and districtwide.

**Overall**

- Based on the data available, what impact is the assessee having?
- To what extent is the assessee achieving desired results?
- How does the assessee's performance compare to last year at this time?

**Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement**

- What's working well?
  - Which administrative competencies and/or key performance targets results is assessee achieving?
  - What evidence supports this conclusion?
- What's not working well?
  - Given this year's results so far, what skills should assessee work to improve?
  - What evidence supports that conclusion?
  - Given the goals of the school/department, what skills should assessee work to develop?

**Implications**

- Given the assessee's areas of need, what are the implications for his/her professional growth plan?
- How can assessor or the District better support the assessee in his/her professional growth targets?
- What additional resources are needed for assessee to reach his/her targets?

Mid-Year Assessment Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

End-of-Year Assessment Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Describe Professional Growth Targets that have been achieved and the impact of each:		Describe area(s) for further improvement:		
	Captures and formally shares knowledge gained by professional growth activities	Meets all professional growth targets by completion date and completes additional strategic professional growth activities	Meets all professional growth targets by completion date	Did not meet all professional growth targets
<i>Professional Growth Points</i>	125	95	85	67

*Signatures indicate participation in the Mid-Year Review*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assessee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assessor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Component 2: Professional Growth for Administrators (continued)**

Mid-Year     End-of-Year

**Directions:** If the assessee scores a "Does Not Meet Standards" on his/her overall assessment, the assessee shall be placed on intervention status and the following portion of the Professional Growth Plan must be completed. This section outlines specific strategies to be completed by the assessee, and to be supported by the assessor, to address each area of deficiency.

INTERVENTION STATUS					
Key Performance Target(s) and/or Administrative Competency to be Strengthened	Intervention Strategies	Measurable By/Observable Behaviors	Completion Date	STATUS	
				A	U

Intervention Status:    Beginning Date: \_\_\_\_\_    Ending Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Status:    \_\_\_\_ A= Acceptable Completion of Activities    \_\_\_\_ U= Unacceptable Completion of Activities

COMMENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Initiation of Intervention Strategies:</b>			
_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Assessee's Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor's Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
-----			
<b>Completion of Intervention Strategies:</b>			
_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Assessee's Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor's Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

## MEP Performance Management System End of-the-Year Summary Sheet

*Office of Human Resources, Recruiting and Performance Management*

### Employee Details

Employee #	Name	Location	Job Title

### End-of-Year Assessment

Component	Score	Weight	Weighted Assessment
Administrative Competencies Score (Including Key Performance Targets)		<b>90%</b>	
Professional Growth Score		<b>10%</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>			

<input type="checkbox"/> Substantially Exceeds Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standards
96 and Above	95 – 86	85 – 68	67 and Below

### Performance Profile

**Executive Summary of Overall Performance** *(100 words or less)*

**Key Strengths:**

**List Key Areas for Improvement/Development:**

### End-of-Year Final Evaluation Signatures:

*Signatures indicate that this evaluation has been reviewed and discussed with the assessor and assessee.*

<b>Assessee Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Assessor Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Reviewer Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Human Resources Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

## **APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL LETTER CONTENTS**

Name of Principal  
School Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Principal):

I am a doctoral student at the University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida. I am enrolled in the College of Education, and a member of the National Urban Special Education Leadership Initiative.

I am working on a dissertation titled: *Principals who Exceed District Standards: Improving Outcomes for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities*. This research study will provide educators the opportunity to better understand the impact that school principals have on the educational opportunities for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD). The research will also examine ways in which principals fine-tune established programs, support classroom teachers, and implement meaningful change in the educational placements and programming for students with EBD. As a potential subject of this study, this letter is written to explain how your participation is vital to this research.

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in this study.

The participation requirements are as follows:

- a. You have a rating on your most recent Managerial Exempt Personnel Performance Management Assessment of *Exceeds Standards* or better.
- b. You have programs for students with EBD at your school location.
- c. You consent to audio-recording the interview.

The research procedures will require that you participate in a one-hour interview, to be audio-recorded by the researcher. Information gathered from the interview will be returned to you for review by the researcher. Your name and the name of your school will be kept confidential at all times, and replaced with a numerical code upon agreement to participate. Audio-recordings will be stored in a locked location for a minimum of three years. The data will only be available to the researcher, the participant, and the researcher's dissertation committee.

Your consent to be interviewed as part of this research is strictly voluntary. Your participation is vital and important, as it adds to the body of research addressing principals, teachers, and students with EBD. The results of this study can be used to positively impact the field of students with EBD, and how they are educated in our schools.

If you meet the criteria for participation in this study, and are willing to participate, please contact me via email. Please indicate which times, dates, and locations would be most convenient for your participation in this study. If you have any questions, I may be contacted directly at 786-271-2864, or via e-mail at [TomUhle@DadeSchools.net](mailto:TomUhle@DadeSchools.net).

Thank you in advance for your consideration and consent to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Tom Uhle  
Doctoral Student, University of Central Florida

## **APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL INTERVIEWS**

**Guide questions are printed in boldface.**

Principal responses are in standard font.

## P-1 Interview Transcription

### Research Questions and Guiding Questions

#### **Research Question One:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

#### **1.1 What is your philosophy of education as it relates to programming for students with EBD?**

I believe that education needs to be given appropriately to those students and I believe that the program needs to be followed the way it was *meant* to be followed, with the correct ratio, the number of teachers that are certified in the classroom, I do not believe that paraprofessionals should be used instead of teachers, I believe that *teachers* should be teaching those students. I believe that the regular curriculum needs to be incorporated into the EBD classroom along with their point system.

#### **1.2 How have you used programmatic data, behavioral and academic, to ensure that your programs for students with EBD are successful?**

Basically the programs for EBD students use the same programs that we use for the regular students. Teachers have been trained in the reading strategies and the reading program and all of the core books that we use for regular students are also being employed. Basically my experience with EBD especially with the old SED category has been a very positive one in terms of gains. The entire population for CMS usually makes gains. It is not a population that is stagnant, or



remains stagnant. The second part of this question belongs to the behavioral unit and obviously points systems need to be employed. And behavior modifications need to be in place.

**1.3 How is progress measured for the programs for students with EBD at your school?**

Progress is measured academically like it is measured for every student. Basically the students take the FCAT, the students take the interim assessments, the students have access to the general curriculum. Progress is also documented as far as behavior is concerned. Have they met their behavioral goals? Are there any gains, can those students be “mainstreamed”, to use an old word, or included in the regular programs.

**1.4 How would you describe the programs that your school provides for students with EBD?**

I would describe them as very solid. I have been to other places that either, A. have no program, or B. have programs that do not work. EBD programs at CMS work, and have worked, even in the past, and now even with limited funding. We keep it as much to the true model in the case of the Bertha Abbess Model, as we can. Even with the constraints. We keep the points system. We keep the point store. The behavior reports that go home every day with the student, and that has worked.

**1.5 What practices have you implemented with your programs for students with EBD that have contributed to their success?**

I think that, again we go back to the behavior report, which is a daily thing, back to mainstreaming the child that needs to be mainstreamed. We only mainstream when the kid or the child is ready to go. We do do some placements, first in the old LD setting, or the new VE

setting, to see if the child is successful there, and some children who can hack and are intelligent and successful there can and actually do go on to honors classes and the regular setting. We monitor them, and in the case of, for example, some students who come to our school who are EBD, but come to our school mainstreamed into a regular program, we look at their progress to see if they are placed correctly, and if we have to pull them back in we do. We monitor everyone and I think that the strength lies in the people who are in the program and the way that it is carried out. The teachers at CMS are consistent, they are very good, and some are excellent teachers. They have implemented, and implement every day, basically, the point system and the ideals of the program.

**1.6 What changes have you had to make to improve the quality of the programs for students with EBD at your school, and what prompted you to make those changes?**

Changes happen mainly in the areas of the regular curriculum. When I came to CMS, which seems like eons ago, basically the books that were used in EBD and the VE setting were not regular curriculum books. That has changed. Even EBD teachers are implementing the reading program, and programs like Achieve 3000 which we're piloting this year in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade EBD class, so we can see the gains in those students, inasmuch as we see them with regular students.

**1.7 With regards to your programs for students with EBD, what does the data tell you about disciplinary referral rates and out of school suspensions, and how has this data informed the administrative practices for the programs?**

Basically right now we have one child in our entire EBD unit of 70 students who is, who has had 3 manifestations due to his suspensions. The rest of the children have not had as many, and really we are not suspending as many EBD students for behaviors that ought to be addressed in the

EBD classroom, or with the behavior management teacher, or with a counselor. So we have gotten very savvy in addressing these behaviors and right now, again, there is only one out of compliance who we have had to meet with the parents three times for manifestation. So, the entire EBD unit is doing what the EBD unit needs to be doing.

**1.8 On a program level, what has been the most important thing you have done to impact the quality of educational programming for students with EBD, as a school principal?**

On a program level has been trying to keep the EBD unit intact and separate. That brings us to budgetary concerns. I have tried to keep the EBD unit separate by grade level, I have tried to keep the EBD unit separate by external and internal behaviors, where I know that some other schools have basically joined the two. I believe that joining them does not work. So I have tried to preserve as much as possible the external/internal models and the EBD by grade level.

**1.9 There are many district mandates, federal guidelines and policies with regards to students with EBD that do not allow much flexibility in educational programming. How does that impact the way you serve students with EBD?**

The main threat that I have seen to EBD is lack of funding. Much more than any other programs or mandates may impact, it is really lack of funding that has impacted this population here. And it has changed, and the ratios which we are no longer speaking about have changed, and that impacts the quality of education and the close supervision that you need in an EBD unit. The teacher then cannot do it all. And that is the biggest hurdle that we have found. The rest of the mandates are really, even for all ESE or SPED kids, so they have not been that cumbersome. The latest mandate, though, is in reference to physical restraint and that will be quite cumbersome for the EBD unit, as we try to manage the behavior and also you have to go on the computer and log

in, and provide paperwork, and provide backup for the paperwork, and send it certified return receipt requested to the parent. That has been very cumbersome.

**1.10 How would you characterize your contribution to programs for students with EBD since you have been at your school?**

I think that my contribution has been, as a principal, has been more in terms of funding and keeping the units alive, keeping the units in tact as much as possible. Even with diminished funding, again the program is not funded adequately, again we are relying on some paraprofessionals that are not counted for class size reduction, and my biggest contribution, the way I see it, has been to preserve the original programs as they were meant to be preserved.

**Research Question Two:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

**2.1 In what ways would you describe the teacher's role in educating students with EBD?**

Pivotal. If the teacher is not a strong teacher, or if the teacher does not buy into the model, the teacher is done. And the progress of the EBD students is also done. It has to be a genuine person who likes EBD, not everyone is meant to teach EBD students. So you have to like your students. You have to like their charges and you have to be able to get around whatever problems they have and teach them. And also manage their behavior and teach them correct behavior. If you cannot do that, then EBD is not for you. If you are not a good teacher, you should not be in EBD. It the most taxing of all of the areas that I can see in a school .

**2.2 What types of support do you, as an administrator, provide your teachers who**

### **work with students with EBD?**

I provide them with inservices. School inservices as well as district inservices. EBD teachers, basically, receive the same inservices as regular ed teachers and they also receive targeted inservices that pertains to either their subject area, their area of expertise or EBD itself.

### **2.3 Do you feel that your teachers who work with students with EBD suffer from occupational stress?**

Yes I do. Yes they suffer from occupational stress.

#### **2.3.2 If so, what are the causes of occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

The causes of occupational stress stem not from behavior, but from the family environment, or lack of family environment that most of the EBD children have. Our teachers call homes regularly for good or bad things, so it's not to say that they call for everything that is bad, but once they encounter the family environment, usually very challenging, or sometimes the group home environment for these children. It wears you down. It also wears you down when you see that you have not been successful with a child, and you have invested so much and you have put in so much and something happens. Something happens down the road with a student you have taught, or have invested in, and the person is not successful. I think that impacts the teacher, It has an impact in the long run as well.

Another problem is paperwork. Paperwork is horrible. Just to complete one IEP now a days requires a number of hours that we do not have. One IEP can take an entire day. Paperwork now for safe physical restraint has become another hurdle. Because not only is there paperwork, not only must you run to the post office and mail everything, but we have to go online, we have to

report it to the state of Florida, and things that were easy have become something that we almost a, do not want to do, and sometimes can't even do. So paperwork is a very cumbersome thing for a teacher.

### **2.3.3 If so, what do you do, as a principal, to reduce occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

We go to happy hour. I can say that I have not done anything to reduce stress. The only thing that we have done as a team is to offer support for the teachers, so that if the teacher has a referral, or a case that case that needs to be addressed by an administrator, it is addressed, and the child receives the punishment that is merited and warranted. We do not beat around the bush. We do not make the teacher wait or stand in line or go through a hundred different forms to get that done. I think that's how we have reduced some of that stress. We have also given them tools: technology, books. Tools that sometimes were not given to EBD or SPED teachers, which were who were usually the last ones to get textbooks. So, hopefully we've done something in that respect. In the other respect, for sanity, I don't think we've done anything. Except some happy hours here and there.

### **2.4 What types of support are necessary to work with students with EBD as it pertains to (teacher retention, job satisfaction, occupational stress)?**

It is my belief that all ESE teachers, including all EBD teachers, should receive, contractually, another pay. I don't want to say something like combat pay, but to that line. I do believe that they need to receive payment for the type of work that they do. The regular teachers have no clue what that entails. Regular teachers have no clue, you know, the psychology of the child, knowing each child's folder so well that you know each personality and every single thing that happened

that led up to the person that they have in front of them. I believe that the teachers are not compensated as they ought to be compensated. You can trim budgetary defecits, they live in a state of, “will we have a job next year?, Will we get our numbers next year? Or will we be cut?”. It adds to the stress. Retention of EBD teachers needs be ensured. We have many who basically leave. They go to charter schools or they leave the state of Florida because it becomes quite a stressful category. Quite a stressful job setting for a person, especially for a new teacher coming out of college. If you cannot manage everything that you need to manage in an EBD setting than you’re done for. If you cannot keep you’re cool in an EBD setting, than you’re done for; An EBD setting is not for you.

### **2.5 What practices have been most effective in supporting teachers in programs for students with EBD?**

I think that the practices that have been most successful is to include them in the regular teaching staff and school, to make them feel that they are part of the teaching staff, that they are not separate, that theyre not out there, that theyre not alone, they are not on another planet. I think that a sense of belonging to their department and to the school faculty helps them feel that they are heard and that they matter.

### **2.6 How do you use professional development to ensure that teachers of students with EBD are prepared for the challenges they will face?**

Basically I include EBD teachers in professional trainings. I have included them in reading training, in mathematics training, in science training, in Discovery education training. If there is a training out there, then we ensure that an EBD teacher goes there as a representative of their department. They also are receiving or have received training in the regular ed department. For

example, the ones that go to the math department meetings get training from (department chairperson) in math, so they have received training that the regular teachers are receiving as well. Because they need to infuse the regular curriculum into their classroom, and obviously, tailor it to all the needs of the individual children that they have. But they have been trained, and they are ready to do the regular curriculum in the ESE classroom.

**2.7 How would you describe the level of teacher preparation for newly hired teachers in classrooms for students with EBD, and what do you do about it?**

Basically the level of preparation is usually not there because colleges and universities concern themselves with academics, and field placement and experience is not there. I believe that every teacher of EBD needs to have experience in an EBD unit as at least an intern prior to their coming into education. If they do not know what they are getting in to, then they should never be hired. There should be a place for internship, for internship in a good program at a good unit, not a unit that runs itself like a zoo and has no parameters. That is what is lacking. And you get these students from whatever colleges, fresh out of college, with no experience, and they have no idea what they are getting into, and that is the problem.

**Research Question Three:**

3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:

- a. Allotment of budgetary resources
- b. Disciplinary assistance

*Guiding Questions:*

**3.1 How do you ensure that your students with EBD are being served in the least restrictive environment?**



We make sure that we listen to the teacher to say that the student should be included. If the student should be included in the regular program, they are included in the regular program.

Sometimes we like to try mainstreams with the EBD students into the VE program, see how they do there, and then include them in the regular setting. Sometimes we bypass the VE setting and put them in advanced or regular classes. The teachers are cognizant of this and they evaluate the students. Can the student do it academically? Can the student do it behaviorally? And if so, we put them in regular settings.

### **3.2 How do you use data to guide the placement of students with EBD?**

Data is used as FCAT scores are used to guide children. Obviously we have EBD students who have scored a 4 or a 5 on the FCAT for either reading or mathematics or both. There is no point in putting this child in a regular class. The child is then placed in an advanced class. So we use data from the FCAT, and the data from the individual assessments, from the interim assessments, to guide placement for the following year. And most definitely, most definitely data from the FCAT. Behavioral data we use, obviously, can this child behave in the regular program? Can the child follow rules in the regular program? If you have a genius, but the genius cannot follow rules in a regular program, then that person cannot go to a regular program.

### **3.3 What behavior modification techniques do you use that are effective in maximizing behavioral and academic success for students with EBD?**

First I think that it is important for the classroom teacher to immediately redirect behavior, if that does not happen then we are losing that momentum as we're going. So behavioral interventions, we use the points, and the points are related to a point store where the children can use the points to buy something that, and pretty things I might add, that may be in that point store. So again,

redirect behavior we can send them to the behavior management teacher, which is why she is there, which is an alternative to suspension. Definitely send them to counseling. If they need counseling, they have counselors here. And, use the point system as it was meant to be utilized.

**3.4 What is your role in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary interventions are used for students with EBD?**

My role is to make sure that not every EBD child is suspended for EBD behaviors. EBD behaviors need to be addressed by, a, the EBD teachers, by the behavior management teacher, by CSI, if we had CSI at any point, and definitely by the home. There are some behaviors that we will not compromise, and obviously repeated behaviors after all of the interventions have been in place, that's something that we do not compromise. I have to make sure that the EBD child, also, does not receive ten days for something that does not merit or warrant it. Actually we do not give them ten days unless it is a very serious offense, unless there is a school police case backing it up. Usually we give short amounts of time for them on an outdoor.

**3.5 How do you ensure access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD?**

They have access through their own classrooms, and they have access through places like the media center. If they need to be, an old word, mainstreamed, then it's something for the teachers to decide. And sometimes they even have electives in the regular setting, for example marine skills. We have a lot of EBD children in marine skills, three different periods of it, mainstreamed because that is their talent, or that is what they want. Art and band are two other places where EBD children are also mainstreamed. Career lab, even though it is, in our case, an elective for students with learning disabilities, or VE students, we use that elective as well for EBD children.

So, basically if the teacher decides that the child has to have access to the regular education in the regular setting, than the child has access.

**3.6 How do you allot budgetary resources so that they may impact students with EBD?**

Basically I ensure that a ratio remains intact, and that includes going to budget conferences and fighting to keep the EBD teachers, and the number of EBD teachers that we have, especially when resources are being cut from every school. I make sure, as much as possible, that EBD teachers are not cut. That is not a simple thing nowadays. I also send the counselor, the BMT, and some teachers to basically get as many EBD students into, staffed into our program as humanly possible so we can keep the numbers of students and therefore the number of teachers.

**3.7 Beyond administrative support, what is your role in assisting teachers of students with EBD?**

I think that my role sometimes is to lend an ear to what they have to say. They can say anything from programmatic things, to behavioral things, to the way the unit is developing or evolving, or the lack of support that they are receiving from some members of the unit, anything. And it is to lend an ear, and try to solve those other issues and problems that may arise just from personalities or programs.

## P-2 Interview Transcription

### Research Questions and Guiding Questions

#### **Research Question One:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

#### **1.1 What is your philosophy of education as it relates to programming for students with EBD?**

Well I don't have really a specific philosophy for EBD students because I believe in providing a free and appropriate education for all students. What I want to make sure is that the deliverers of instruction aren't watering down the curriculum, or making the curriculum less valuable to the students because of their disability.

#### **1.2 How have you used programmatic data, behavioral and academic, to ensure that your programs for students with EBD are successful?**

We look at the whole child, and we work really closely with our EBD teachers. We need to know what the weaknesses are, and what the strengths are as far as those kids. For example, I have spoken to one of our teachers with a particular...first of all, I go into the EBD classes, so I'm somewhat familiar with the kids, I have an understanding of what their strengths and weaknesses are, and so essentially what happens is that when we are dealing with a student who is EBD, we are looking at the entire picture, taking into consideration what their exceptionality is, what their particular issues are, but then we also make sure that they are receiving the strong social and

academic background that they need, and we are successful there, not because of me, but because of the teachers that are involved with the program.

**1.3 How is progress measured for the programs for students with EBD at your school?**

Well once again, we look at graduation rate, whether they are on a special diploma or a regular diploma. We articulate with our teachers constantly through reviewing progress. Now, I don't do that personally, but through the whole setup that we have. We have a counselor assigned to the EBD program, we have open parent forums with kids that are in the EBD program, we have an assistant principal who is in charge of EBD, who is in charge of the whole SPED program. So, she really is the conduit by which I get advised of all these issues.

**1.4 How would you describe the programs that your school provides for students with EBD?**

Personally, myself, I have been a principal of an elementary school that did not have an EBD program, a middle school that had an EBD program, and now a high school for 6 years with an EBD program, and I think that we do an excellent job. Because, once again, we meet the needs of the students at the academic level, but the level of compassion that we have for those kids, through the good work of our teachers, makes the difference.

**1.5 What practices have you implemented with your programs for students with EBD that have contributed to their success?**

I think, really, is the selection of the right teachers for that program. I, and I look at Ms. X as an example. I have been in her classroom. I have sat with those kids. She has walked those children into my office to look at my turtles, to have a conversation with me, to present me with artwork,

I've sat in the classroom, we've played a game. And, I'm just totally amazed at her ability to connect with the kids, it has nothing to do with me. I'm just the benefactor of her good work.

**1.6 What changes have you had to make to improve the quality of the programs for students with EBD at your school, and what prompted you to make those changes?**

Matching the personnel with the students. When I arrived here, we had personnel that were running that program that were individual, that were babysitters, and were not challenging the kids academically. Did not have the kind of match you need to have for children with those types of disabilities, and so by, kind of like reshuffling the chairs on the deck, we provided them with the support that they needed.

**1.7 With regards to your programs for students with EBD, what does the data tell you about disciplinary referral rates and out of school suspensions, and how has this data informed the administrative practices for the programs?**

Well let me just say that we utilize outdoor suspension as the last resort. We take into consideration the exceptionalities of kids. We also work very closely with the kid and their family, to let them know that we are not going to allow the exceptionality to get in the way of us providing a safe and effective learning environment. We have had numerous conversations with one particular family that we had to do...it wasn't a suspension it was a Baker Act, and it was really in the best interest of the kid. The parents did not see it, but myself and the teacher involved, we got through this. It was not easy, but, once again, we fully understand the makeup of these kids, we know that they are going to make mistakes, they are going to use bad judgment, but majority of times, the population that we have issues with as far as suspensions are not EBD kids, it's the non-SPED kids that give us the issues.

**1.8 On a program level, what has been the most important thing you have done to impact the quality of educational programming for students with EBD, as a school principal?**

Well, I think there are a couple of things. First of all, number one providing the resources that the teachers need in the program. There has never been a request for something that I have said no to. And second of all, going back to the previous question, the important thing is matching the personnel. Its kind of like taking a person who is a 19<sup>th</sup> century man and putting him behind the wheel of a car. If you do that, I don't care how talented that person is, it's not going to work.

When you find the right match for those kids, and we have it here, you're going to be successful.

**1.9 There are many district mandates, federal guidelines and policies with regards to students with EBD that do not allow much flexibility in educational programming. How does that impact the way you serve students with EBD?**

Well, we always put the kid first. That's number one. We always put the kid first here. Number two, we will be as flexible as the law allows us to be. We are certainly not going to violate any federal statutes or guidelines. Anything contained within the IEP, we are going to make sure that those services are delivered. But if there is flexibility that is needed to meet the needs of the kids, if it's a schedule change, if it's in the best interest of the kid, we are going to go ahead with it, we're going to break the barriers necessary and pay the price on the other side of the equation. And it's not going to be a very heavy price because, we're not going to break the law, but we're going to do whatever we have to do to get the job done.

**1.10 How would you characterize your contribution to programs for students with EBD since you have been at your school?**

I would say my contribution is giving my teachers, my kids, and their families my full support. I am not a gatekeeper. I am not someone who stands in the way of progress. My philosophy of leadership is I may sit on the top of the pyramid, but actually what I view is that I want my people to make the decisions. I believe in that type of decision making process. I do not sit behind this desk and just dole out money and make decisions, I bring people in. For example, with Ms. X, as an example, whether we're talking about a union issue or we're talking about an issue with one of the EBD kids, or something in general, we always sit together and we fact find. And I do that with all of my teachers. I'm just blessed that I've got the resources and also have the ability to see in them what they might not even see in themselves, and that's how we get the job done.

**Research Question Two:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

**2.1 In what ways would you describe the teacher's role in educating students with EBD?**

Well, I think that, number one, they have to have a background in special education. Number two, it's always helpful that they have strong content knowledge in order to successfully implement the curriculum. But I think number three, and most important, they have to have compassion and patience and flexibility in dealing with children that have this type of a disability. If you are an inflexible, non-trusting, non-caring person, being in that program is not for you. I will not allow a person of that ilk to be in that program. I'll find another spot for them. Then, I'll also try to find the kind of support to make that type of personality change. But, having



a personality of flexibility and compassion is so important in dealing with special needs children. If it's ESOL, if it's being an inclusion teacher, we look at personality very strongly. In fact that, to me, that is number one because you can effectively, through professional development, assist the other things, but if the personality is not there, because personality drives decision making. That to me is a lot, it's something that a lot of principals don't understand or they just don't see it. But I've been lucky enough to be involved in some leadership courses that really brought that to the forefront for me. So if your personality doesn't meet what we need in that classroom, we're going to find someone else who can do that job.

**2.2 What types of support do you, as an administrator, provide your teachers who work with students with EBD?**

Well, I want my teachers to know, and I use this consistently across the board, whether you're a math teacher, a French teacher, or if you're in the EBD program, my teachers know that I have an open-door policy, that I'm here to help them do their job. I do not stand in their way. I do not want to stand as a wall to prevent them from doing what they think is in the best interest of the kids. They have a tremendous amount of freedom. I go into their classrooms, I watch what they are doing. But my support, as an administrator, is based upon me trusting them, that they are doing the right thing for our kids, and the data shows that they are.

**2.3 Do you feel that your teachers who work with students with EBD suffer from occupational stress?**

Yes, without a doubt. Yes.

**2.3.2 If so, what are the causes of occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

Well I think that the teachers take ownership of the exceptionalities that the kids have. And one of the issues in that type of environment is that each kid has, is an individual. And I can remember sitting in a circle, playing a game in Ms. X's class, and I think she has 6 or 8 kids. And each kid has a different personality and a different, uh, quality that drove their exceptionality. For example, one lady, extremely bright, extremely articulate, but also very needy for constant attention. And that can wear on someone. And so, at the end of the day, I could fully understand a teacher being in that environment of dealing with those kids, the stress. It's stressful. It really is. And that's why it's important for me, for them to understand that I'm here for a pat on the back. I'm here to let them know that I care about them. I'm here to support them, to give them what they need in order to make their job more livable.

**2.3.3 If so, what do you do, as a principal, to reduce occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

Well, first of all I have to say personally, I have sense of humor. Even in the darkest moments, in the darkest hour of the day, when the walls are closing in, whether it's here in my office or out in the hallway, I want people to laugh. I also want people to understand that without humor, life is debilitating. Majority of people who are in our profession are here because they care about the kids, they want to make a difference, they are not interested in making big money because they will never make big money. But they do it because they have a feel for people. But there is a price to pay for that, because you walk out of here on a daily basis owning the issues and problems that the kids bring to you.

**2.4 What types of support are necessary to work with students with EBD as it pertains to (teacher retention, job satisfaction, occupational stress)?**

Well, I think that, number one, you have to provide teachers with an outlet so that they feel that they are somewhat in control of their lives. We do that by having a variety of committees building-wide where teachers participate in the process. As far as teacher retention is concerned, we work very, very closely with teachers in order for them to understand that they are not alone. The unique thing about teaching is that it's a very lonely profession because once you go into that classroom and you close that door, you're doing it alone. And many, many times, there is a sense of isolation. And people need to be recognized, people need to be told that they are appreciated. I worked with a principal many years ago, who actually hired me in my first position, and periodically he would come to me and he would say to me, "You know X, I'm really happy that you're here". And I bought into that. And there are many times, particularly with our "newbies", and most of these "newbies" are either kids, to me at least they're kids, they are in their early twenties, or they are a little bit older but it's been a change of career. And those are the folks that we are constantly picking up, and showing appreciation to them. We recognize them at faculty meetings. We provide them with as many goodies as we can throughout the year, and we care about them.

## **2.5 What practices have been most effective in supporting teachers in programs for students with EBD?**

I think the most effective practice is looking them square in the eye and saying, "look, I know that you've got a tough job, and you are basically fighting dragons on a daily basis, and though the kids might not say 'thank you', and the parents might not say 'thank you', I thank you for your service." I think one of the most compelling issues for parents who do not know what teachers go through on a daily basis. And I think that parents themselves are very frustrated with the fact that

they have a child, who is not a perfect child, who has some issues, and they want their kids to be ‘fixed’, so to speak. We try our very best to fix kids to the degree that we want to give them the opportunity to go on with the skills that will make them somewhat productive in society. It doesn’t always work out, but we try our darndest here. I think that parents put a tremendous amount of pressure on us to do that, and I want my teachers to know that I am extremely appreciative of their efforts.

**2.6 How do you use professional development to ensure that teachers of students with EBD are prepared for the challenges they will face?**

Well, I think if there is a weak spot, it’s there. Because our focus on professional development, really, is global, rather than a specific type of PD. It is really driven by FCAT, and it’s driven by the development and implementation of next generation standards in the classroom. However, if an EBD teacher comes to me and says, “Mr. X, there’s a professional development program, there’s a piece of software, an event, a conference that I would like to go to”, we support them one hundred percent. As well as I support my teachers who teach AP classes. And so while we may not have targeted instruction for them, my door is always open, and through either coming in to see me, or the department chairperson, or speaking to our program specialist, or to the AP in charge of the program, the door is always open for them to come in and say, “I have an idea, and I need to take that opportunity here to be better at what I do”. And we just, we go with it.

**2.7 How would you describe the level of teacher preparation for newly hired teachers in classrooms for students with EBD, and what do you do about it?**

It’s been my experience that, first of all, every once in a while we get a new teacher here, but I’ve been very lucky here because the majority of folks who are in our EBD and SPED program

come to us with a wealth of experience. They come to us highly recommended. And, they do a wonderful job. The issue is that every once in a while you get a new person that you hire and you see a spark in them, you see something that says, “this is someone that internally can do it.” And, what we do, really very simply, is to support them by hooking them up with a more veteran person, and I’ll use Ms. X as an example. She is, to me, by far one of the most effective individuals I have ever met because she is more than willing to work with someone to try to help them become a better person. And at the same time they become a better teacher.

**Research Question Three:**

3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:

- a. Allotment of budgetary resources
- b. Disciplinary assistance

*Guiding Questions:*

**3.1 How do you ensure that your students with EBD are being served in the least restrictive environment?**

Well, I think the only way I can ensure that is by making sure that the IEPs are reviewed properly and all of the services that are being delivered, are appropriate for that student, and that we are not missing anything. And if we are missing of something, then of course we make the corrective changes, whether it’s through a parent conference, or working with an advocate. See, many, many principals are concerned or are frightened of working with people who are proactive, who care about their kids. They consider them “busybodies”. I don’t look at it that way. I look at parenting as the toughest job we will ever have. If I have a parent who wants to come in to me and register a concern about something that is happening in this busy, to me, that

is someone that I've got to listen to. Now, they may be right, and it will be corrected. They may be wrong, and we provide them with the right information. But the bottom line is that we have to make sure that we are statutorily required to deliver services to kids that have exceptionalities, and the last thing that I want to do is shortchange anybody's kids.

### **3.2 How do you use data to guide the placement of students with EBD?**

Well, we really rely on teacher recommendation. For example, if an EBD teacher comes to me and says to me, "look, I'm teaching these five or six kids math, and I've got this one kid that really has the ability to do it at a higher level, I'd like to move that kid into an Algebra I class, or an honors class, or the next level of math." I support that one hundred percent. But that, really, is driven by the expectations of the teachers and by the desires of the teachers. Now, if a parent comes in and says, "look, my kid has the ability to do higher level work." We have a meeting with the teacher and determine what is in the best interest of the kids. And a lot of the times it's true, ah, we need to experiment, and say, "Look, let's move 'Johnny' into that classroom for the second marking period and let's see what happens. But let's remember we're dealing in a totally different environment, you know? He may be in a class with twenty-five instead of eight. And we'll see how Johnny does." And we're willing to take those chances because you never really know what turns a kid on about school. And it very well could be that little change, and we support that.

### **3.3 What behavior modification techniques do you use that are effective in maximizing behavioral and academic success for students with EBD?**

I think showing respect for kids, to me, is the most important thing. One of the areas that I feel very comfortable in is being able to deescalate someone who is out of control. And the practices

that I use is putting my hands on their shoulder, eye contact, speaking as loud as they get, I become much calmer and softer. And I use that kind of methodology in order to make sure that, in the end, the kid understands that they have to take ownership for their behavior. Now, listen, if a kid needs to be “taken down” to protect themselves, so be it, we’ll do that. But the majority of times I think a lot of it comes out of the frustration of the kid, that their exceptionality is blocking their way of making good decisions. So, if you can get them to stop and think about what they’re doing, whether it’s they’re shooting their mouth off, or they’re getting physical, or getting so agitated, I just think that if you relax, and try to deescalate it, you can have a lot of success. And that, it’s been my method, it’s my “M.O.,” and I use that same with kids who don’t have exceptionalities that...we had a situation just the other day. I had a kid who was totally out of control, screaming and yelling at one of my administrators. And the administrator’s yelling back at him. I mean, we’re not getting anywhere. I walk up to the kid, I don’t even know this kid, and I just say, “Excuse me, do you know who I am?” And I said it three times because he was yelling, and finally he realized I was talking to him. And he looked at me and I said, “Now that I’ve got your attention, do you know who I am?” He said, “Yea”. I said, “This is not acceptable. Let’s take a walk and figure this out.” And, all of a sudden, I’ve got him out of a very volatile situation. I’ve ended what I call a “pissing contest” between an adult and a kid, because neither one of them can afford to lose. And by taking the kid out of the environment you’ve taken him out of that rush-ride situation where he’s acting out for his mistakes. And, so, that really is my philosophy. I use my mediation skills as a way to deescalate very, very, tense issues and situations. So far I haven’t been punched out (laughs).

### **3.4 What is your role in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary interventions are used for students with EBD?**

Well, first of all, we have specific guidelines, as far as our EBD is concerned. We don't have a separate code of student conduct for them, but we do have to make exceptions because sometimes exceptionalities do drive decision-making. And as long as the student is willing to understand that as the misbehaviors continue, that the punishment will also escalate. But I don't want the kid to ever feel that if they make one mistake than they're totally out of the game. And the reason I feel this way is that when I was in sixth grade, I had a teacher that had a demerit system in the classroom. And Mr. X, I remember him like it was yesterday, you've gotta realize that I'm almost sixty years old, if you got ten demerits for the week, you got an unsatisfactory for that week, and that added up as the marking period got deeper and deeper. Mr. X, whenever he would hand out the demerits, for any indiscretion, he would automatically give you ten demerits. And there was no "work back plan". If (I) got ten demerits on Monday, there was no way, no matter how well I behaved for the rest of the week, that I can get a decrease in the demerits. So If I screwed up on Monday, I'm dead for the rest of the week, so I didn't really give a crap for the rest of the week. And so my philosophy is that you've got to give kids an opportunity to take ownership of their mistakes, understand that the indiscretion is not a game breaker, but they have to prove to you that they're worthy of making good decisions, and I've used that for a long time, and that works for me.

### **3.5 How do you ensure access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD?**

Well, once again, we have a very large inclusion program here. Very large. And it works for us. And any child, based upon a teacher recommendation, or a parent request, and through the IEP,



as long as we're within guidelines of the IEP, we'll move that kid into an inclusion or general education program. Because my philosophy is, and I learned this a long time ago, that the tendency of a kid is to adapt to the predominant behavior of a classroom. And I did this for "at risk" kids when I was a middle-school teacher. I took the "hardest-core" kids in Opa Locka and I put them into my advanced civics class. And I took them in. I adopted them from the alternative program, because we had a separate alternative program, and I took kids and they, kind of like, got intertwined into the personality of that class. And so the kid who was totally out of control in one class, when he came into my class, he modeled what was there. He was studious, he was respectful, and he excelled.

### **3.6 How do you allot budgetary resources so that they may impact students with EBD?**

Well, once again, the word "no" does not exist in this office when my teachers need something. Now, if a teacher comes in and wants something that they cannot prove to me that has merit, than I am going to say, "no", but if a teacher brings and shows me something that they are excited about, and they're buying into it, and they feel that it's going to benefit their kids, than I am going to get that for them. Either through my "02 Account", through programmatic money that we have, or through EESAC, or through donation from the PTSA, we will go after that and we will get that resource for them.

### **3.7 Beyond administrative support, what is your role in assisting teachers of students with EBD?**

To be honest with you, it's to hug 'em. Because I believe that they have the toughest job in the world. And just for them to know that they have someone down here in the main office that, if they need to come in here to cry, I have tissues. If they need to scream and yell at someone, I'll

give them every opportunity to get it off their chest. Because, it's been my experience with people that all they want to do is be heard. "I've got something that's laying on my chest and I've got to get it out." And, if it's job-related, than that's my responsibility. And many, many, times it's related to a situation that's happening at home, that they're bringing here, and that's where the tears come in. Because it may start off as an issue with a kid, but it's really about an issue with a significant other, or a spouse, or a family. I also say that the most valuable piece of furniture that principals do not have is a couch, so that people can come in and just sit and relax and just blow off steam.

## P-3 Interview Transcription

### Research Questions and Guiding Questions

#### **Research Question One:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

#### *Guiding Questions:*

#### **1.1 What is your philosophy of education as it relates to programming for students with EBD?**

My philosophy of education for educational programming for students with EBD is as follows: I think EBD students should be afforded the same opportunity as general education students. And here at my school we try to do that. We require that the teachers are certified in a particular area, even though they are SPED teachers. And we try to place those kids with their teacher's strongest area of concentration. With that, we have our EBD, we have two self-contained EBD units, and they are a combination of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. So what we have done, we've combined those two EBD units with a self-contained VE unit. And among those three teachers, each one teaches two preps. One teaches math and science, math and social studies, one teacher is math and reading and language arts. So we've done that so each one of those teachers has two preps and they also can have a more focused lesson with those students. So we have those kids broken down by sixth, seventh, and eighth grade and we rotate them among those three teachers for the different subjects.

**1.2 How have you used programmatic data, behavioral and academic, to ensure that your programs for students with EBD are successful?**

We have utilized all the data for our EBD students as well as we have for our general ed students. We have taken a look at their IQ, we've taken a look at their FCAT scores, the historical grade data, over the last two or three years, the historical FCAT data for the last two or three years, and we provide them classes where they can be as successful as possible.

**1.3 How is progress measured for the programs for students with EBD at your school?**

They take regular assessments, just as the general ed kids do, they take the interim assessment, the fall, the baseline, the fall interim, as well as benchmark tests that are given in between those midterm and interim assessments.

**1.4 How would you describe the programs that your school provides for students with EBD?**

I think we provide a wide range of programs for them. We have more of a behavior modification point system as well. That has field trips included in it. They are afforded the same opportunities. We have a grade level team, with team leaders, and our EBD students are included in all of the activities that are going on, as well as our general ed students.

**1.5 What practices have you implemented with your programs for students with EBD that have contributed to their success?**

Well one way, prior to my getting here, they just had them grouped in those classrooms for the day, and I have semi-mainstreamed them. You know, go out to different classes throughout the building, other than electives.

**1.6 What changes have you had to make to improve the quality of the programs for students with EBD at your school, and what prompted you to make those changes?**

Well, what prompted me to make some of the changes that we made is I put myself in their situation. Would I want to be cooped up in one classroom all day? By moving them at a variety of places through the day, I think we contribute to their social well-being, as well as their academic well-being.

**1.7 With regards to your programs for students with EBD, what does the data tell you about disciplinary referral rates and out of school suspensions, and how has this data informed the administrative practices for the programs?**

We've had very few referrals involving our EBD students. I compared the historical suspension data to the data that we currently have now, and the EBD suspensions have gone down tremendously. You have to understand that EBD came from a combination of SED kids and EH. That doesn't mean that a kid is not high-functioning. They need to get out and socialize with their peers. I mean, they aren't always going to get along, but they are going to have the same problems as their peers.

**1.8 On a program level, what has been the most important thing you have done to impact the quality of educational programming for students with EBD, as a school principal?**

I think it's sharing that the instructors that I have for these EBD students are well-prepared to instruct them. And, also, that they're, the person that I have chosen, that they're good models for the students. I've been looking for a male because usually most of my EBD students are male, and I've been looking for a good, strong male for that department, and I haven't been able to find one. I mean, even if it is a para, but I haven't been able to get one thus far.

**1.9 There are many district mandates, federal guidelines and policies with regards to students with EBD that do not allow much flexibility in educational programming. How does that impact the way you serve students with EBD?**

Well, you have to be creative with the scheduling. You know, I know I can pick up a master schedule, and I know that Johnny is an EBD student, and I have Johnny in 8<sup>th</sup> grade science on the second floor with one of my SPED teachers. I know that Johnny is a level 1 in reading, and I have him scheduled in a Language class with a SPED teacher on the first floor, who's been trained, of course, in the Language program. So you have to, in order to get maximum funding, you have to have it coded correctly, but you also have to make sure you have those contact hours built in and we don't, I don't violate any state or district mandates with that. Everything I do is above board, and I don't have a problem sharing it and going over with my bosses or my peers or anybody. Because I'm not going to do anything to circumvent the system or, you just have to be creative in what you do.

**1.10 How would you characterize your contribution to programs for students with EBD since you have been at your school?**

I would have to say that my contributions to the program, on top of visiting them, probably, daily, probably...I know they appreciate the fact that they are moving around and they aren't maintained in that one room all day. I think they appreciate that fact. I think also the paras I have there appreciate that as well. They don't, aren't locked down. They can move around and go about with kids, and I think that has been my most significant contribution, probably.

**Research Question Two:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

**2.1 In what ways would you describe the teacher's role in educating students with EBD?**

I think the teacher's role is very important. As I stated earlier, I think they have to be good role models for these students. They have to be very good disciplinarians. They have to be firm, but they have to be fair as well. And you have to have a good mix. Sometimes personalities don't always get along, and you have to realize that and be able to make changes when necessary.

**2.2 What types of support do you, as an administrator, provide your teachers who work with students with EBD?**

We provide them, I provide them with a lot of professional development in their respective areas, subject areas included. They are included in our weekly departmental meetings: Math, Science, Social Studies, Reading, Language Arts. And they all attend their respective meetings. So they are up to date with the changes and everything that's going on. And, just like I said, they are treated just like the general ed. There is no difference, I mean, a kid is a kid.

**2.3 Do you feel that your teachers who work with students with EBD suffer from occupational stress?**

Hmm. Well yes. I do. I don't think it's because they're actually dealing with EBD kids. **2.3.2 If so, what are the causes of occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

I think occupational stress can be attributed to a lot of things in the current climate that we are in, considering financial situation of the district, and the state, and the country. I think, yes, there are

some occupational stress, but I don't think it's directly related to being a teacher of EBD students.

**2.3.3 If so, what do you do, as a principal, to reduce occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

Well, we've had, I've had meetings on the financial outlook of the district. I have encouraged staff members to not share certain things, maybe, with the students, and, you know, stay strong and stay loyal to the cause because eventually good wins out over evil.

**2.4 What types of support are necessary to work with students with EBD as it pertains to (teacher retention, job satisfaction, occupational stress)?**

Well, I think that one great area that I, one area that I really like to support, that means that, in EBD, and probably in SPED in general, we get a lot of overage kids. I mean, it brings to mind, just yesterday I had a kid in here. Brother tried to enroll the kid, the kid's eighteen years old. In middle school. The kid had no grades since 2007. And as I looked over his history, I had several questions for the brother. This young man has been released from Juvenile Justice since December of 09. We are now in February of 2011. Where has he been for the last 14 months? You know, and his answer to me was he was in foster care. And I'm like, ok, well foster care, he should be in somebody's school or something. But, you know, his thing was, I understand he was trying to get assistance for his brothers, his brother actually. And I told him, I said, you know, I know you've probably been getting the run-around, because he told me he had been to several places. And that his brother didn't know how to read, and this and that. I told him, I said, "Look, I'm going to be really honest with you." I said, "You enroll your brother in here right now, today, it's not going to teach him to read between now and the end of the year. It's not



going to teach him. Because this is something that didn't just start, you know, today or yesterday." And I told him, I said, you know, "We need to think about what we can do for the best interest for your brother." And I referred him to a program, South Florida Workforce. Youth Corps. Where the child has to be at least sixteen years of age, have a social security card, birth certificate, and the family be on some sort of public assistance. And the gentleman took that and ran with it. Because, you know, I told him, I said, "Your brother doesn't want to be sitting in classes with kids who are eleven years old. Just as those eleven year-olds don't want to be sitting in class with an eighteen year old, he don't want to be sitting in a class with them either." I said, "So, we need to be mindful of that." But I think, you know, within our EBD setting here, we have gotten quite a number of overage students. You know, I had two seventeen year-olds that I just exited out and I put them in that same type of program. And, you know, something ought to be done with those. And I think the biggest challenge we have, within SPED period, but, I did have to support our teachers working with them. Because those kids know that they are overage, and they create discipline problems for those teachers.

### **2.5 What practices have been most effective in supporting teachers in programs for students with EBD?**

What practices...I think the behavior mod works pretty good. I think that, I think the kids are driven by that. A lot of times, not having, you know, our school is 98% free or reduced lunch. Very low socio-economic. So not having a lot, I think the kids are appreciative every Friday when they get that, go to the behavior point store, I think they are appreciative of that.

### **2.6 How do you use professional development to ensure that teachers of students with EBD are prepared for the challenges they will face?**

Well, we encourage them to go to any professional develop that is going to assist them with their duties and responsibilities. To include Safe Physical Management, any type of academic professional development, getting our 8<sup>th</sup> grade EBD students ready for the science exam, the writing exam, or anything like that. You know, we encourage them to register for any type of professional development. We also require them to do mandatory professional development within the subject areas they are teaching.

**2.7 How would you describe the level of teacher preparation for newly hired teachers in classrooms for students with EBD, and what do you do about it?**

Well, I guess, I don't have any, I haven't had any in my three years here that have been newly hired in EBD. However, if I had one, I guess I would try to pair that teacher up with someone who has been here a while and has experience with dealing with our population. Because, being new and fresh and out of college, I guess an EBD teacher, you know, they do an internship, but I don't think an internship actually, nothing beats on the job training. Internship, to me, is not equivalent to it.

**Research Question Three:**

3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:

- a. Allotment of budgetary resources
- b. Disciplinary assistance

*Guiding Questions:*

**3.1 How do you ensure that your students with EBD are being served in the least restrictive environment?**

Well, I, just like I said earlier, I have been going out and visiting the mainstreams every period. They're moving about every period of the day. So, basically, they are in the least restrictive environment.

### **3.2 How do you use data to guide the placement of students with EBD?**

We use data, as I told you earlier, the historical data, the FCAT data, we have some level 3's in our EBD program, and they are in advanced language arts. So we use the data to guide instruction, and placement of those kids in the right class.

### **3.3 What behavior modification techniques do you use that are effective in maximizing behavioral and academic success for students with EBD?**

Well, we have a very controlled lunch. Prior to my getting here, we used to have it where the EBD would eat separate. Away from the general ed students. We don't do that anymore. We have two lunches, and their classroom, or whatever classroom they are in at the time, if they're on the first floor or the second floor, they'll go to lunch with A or B lunch, so they may not even have it all at the same time. They might not even eat lunch together. So they are in the least restrictive environment, and they blend in, and that's part of the behavior mod. Because they have to be able to show appropriate behavior in the hallways, and in the cafeteria, and in the classroom. And there's a para that goes with them. There's one that rotates between two classes with them, there's always one somewhere around, so they know that somebody's watching, to ensure that they can have that. Our point system is generated off their behavior in those areas, in the hallways, in the classrooms, in the cafeteria. And then, of course, we even take it a step further, because we go to their bus and transportation to and from home. How did they act when they're going to and from us as well? Were there any issues?

### **3.4 What is your role in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary interventions are used for students with EBD?**

Well, we use, we, now, honestly, and I know there are certain guidelines we have to use with SPED students, and particularly EBD students, with FABs and BIPs, but now you have to do that for gen. ed. students. So basically there's no difference. We use progressive discipline with them. And, you know, we just had a situation yesterday with one of our EBD students. "*You go, but I don't want to go*". So the assistant principal, so I said, "OK, he admitted to doing it, so what we'll do is we'll place him in that CSI for a couple of days." And he'll go over there, he'll do just fine, because we do math in our SCSI. That's the intervention that we provide for them. Math, because that's the most challenging. But we use progressive discipline with our EBD students.

### **3.5 How do you ensure access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD?**

We expose them to everything that our general ed. kids have. They are using the new math work text. They are using the reading and language arts programs that our general ed. kids use, the science workbooks, everything.

### **3.6 How do you allot budgetary resources so that they may impact students with EBD?**

I, at the beginning of the year, I ask my EBD teacher and paras if there are any supplies or any materials that they may need throughout the year, to go ahead and apprise me of that at the beginning of the year, because that's when the money's fresh, it's there. Let's go ahead and get it. And remember that it's for the entire year. And come mid-year, I normal years, I'll ask them again to give me an order of anything they need as well. And I'll see if we can accommodate you. Refilling the point store. A lot of times we get donations for the point store.

### **3.7 Beyond administrative support, what is your role in assisting teachers of students with EBD?**

Well just, a lot of times, students, but definitely the teachers also, I guess, look at it as they are being appreciated when you visit their classroom, see different things that they are doing, projects they are doing with the kids. I went to a science classroom and the teacher had a group of boys, all boys, and she, they were making planets out of newspapers, solar systems, different things. And she just, she acknowledged me and pointed at some kids at the back table and I'm like, "OK, tell me what planet this is", and they describe the rings, Uranus, and they were, teachers are excited as well when you come to their classroom and show interest in what they are doing. So I think that my doing that on a daily basis assists the teachers.

## P-4 Interview Transcription

### Research Questions and Guiding Questions

#### **Research Question One:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

#### *Guiding Questions:*

##### **1.1 What is your philosophy of education as it relates to programming for students with EBD?**

I think it's important to ensure that the students are placed with the appropriate instructors. I think that has a lot to do with their emotional wellbeing. And obviously the certification is important. But my philosophy, in general, having been a special education teacher, it that every child is entitled to having their needs met, and for the special ed program to accommodate their needs. Every child can learn, and will learn. So, that's pretty much my philosophy, having been a SPED person.

##### **1.2 How have you used programmatic data, behavioral and academic, to ensure that your programs for students with EBD are successful?**

You obviously use all the data on a regular basis. The teachers in the classrooms, specifically the EBD teachers, use cue cards to track the students with their latest interim assessment data, and FCAT and reporting scores in the different categories so that the child takes ownership of their learning and the learning process. And then from there we group them into abilities based on the instruction, and they sometimes pair them, the lower level kids with a weakness, with a stronger

student, in the class in order to ensure academic success. My SPED, my EBD programs encompass Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies throughout the course of the day, and most of the time the students are with those teachers, pretty much all day. But, in and out, the period changes every 51 minutes. So, they may be going next door, they may be going...

**1.3 How is progress measured for the programs for students with EBD at your school?**

Well, like I said, as far as academic progress, we use the content data to include, like I said, the interim assessment, also they do pop quizzes, they do tests, the point sheets, the behavior point sheets, for the behavior.

**1.4 How would you describe the programs that your school provides for students with EBD?**

Well, there's several different components to it. Obviously there's the behavioral, like we said, point sheets, and rewarding them, with a lot of positive reinforcement that goes on based on their point sheets. There's also, we have a behavioral interventionist, and clinician, actually we have two on our campus. Our trust counselor has been trained as a clinician. We have a full time EH clinician as well that works very well with the students, does a lot of group interventions and everything. You know, with budget cuts and everything we started, when I first got here we had a BMT and all that, but unfortunately we don't. Last year we had an art therapist here, we don't now. And the kids also receive other resources like hearing or speech. So, they do a great job with the kids.

We had a wonderful art therapist last year, for the past three years, and I think it's a component that the kids really miss. She did some great things with the kids. But our EBD clinician, she's really good with the kids.

**1.5 What practices have you implemented with your programs for students with EBD that have contributed to their success?**

Well, one of the things that I did do was ensure that all of my SPED classes had some sort of technology in it. We have a Promethian in each room. What we have now is a double classroom that is shared with the two EBD teachers and, of course, paraprofessionals, we have three paraprofessionals that work with the kids. Actually, four, ones a one on one. So I have one one-to-one and three paras. Going back to the technology. Making sure that they have computers so the kids can go online and do reading plus. We have four or five computers in the back of the room, probably, I think, four. And both teachers share them because they kind of share the same room. And also the promethian is in there, an LCD projector, actually two LCD projectors in the room, one for each side of the room, but one's mounted with the promethian. So that's one of the things I've tried to do, distribute evenly within the building. And of course PD, that goes along with it, to make sure teachers are using it appropriately. You know, we try to include them in everything. We make them, even though they are close, they are kind of all together, they're all in that same area, but that's what they wanted as a team, but they're involved with everything. We reward them along with the other kids. You know, if we have field days, they all go out, if we have assemblies, they're a part of the total school.

**1.6 What changes have you had to make to improve the quality of the programs for students with EBD at your school, and what prompted you to make those changes?**



Well, truthfully, I'm a small school. I have a student population of 650 students, 50 are, about 50 are EBD, and I have probably another, maybe, 60 to 70 SPED, VE, VE classes and stuff. I was starting to say, since I'm a small school, several of my teachers are multi-certified. I haven't touched my EBD teachers, for obvious reasons, but one of them is National Board Certified, and both of them are integrated curriculum certified, so I've kind of taken a little bit advantage that many of them are multi-certified. So that might be some of the changes that I've made within the program. Last year, instead of having isolated EH classes, I have EBD, the more restrictive form, and disciplinary team, then I have those that are more VE. That is one of the things I changed. Instead of, in the past, for the past three years, they had EH class too. So one of the things, if we're doing our job as educators, the ultimate goal is to get the kids mainstreamed, as much as possible. And if we're doing it right, then they'll be successful in that. The truth of the matter is that the majority have been. But one of the changes, I may have to make corrections and add one more teacher to the EBD setting. It was something that I did, like I said, because I'm a small school, because they are multi-certified. But for the most part the kids have been successful, in the VE setting. Still receiving any services that they need, or counseling services, anything like that. We try to make, we monitor their progress, and academic progress. If we see kids are not cutting it, and, obviously, even with the regular inclusion classes, we monitor all of those kids and monitor their academic success, with compliance with the IEP.

**1.7 With regards to your programs for students with EBD, what does the data tell you about disciplinary referral rates and out of school suspensions, and how has this data informed the administrative practices for the programs?**

Well, one of the things I tried to do school-wide, not just EBD, is do more of an exclusion from a class, instead of. If there is one teacher having trouble with a child, I'm not going to punish them all day, and have them missing classes. It's too important to us, and to the child, that they're in their class. We do have an alternative to an outdoor suspension program, through our Trust Counselor, whose, I've said, is also EBD certified, has gone through the training. And we will often times, with these children, in lieu of outdoor, have them go to this alternative program where there's counseling involved with students and parents in the evening. And every Thursday night, my Trust Counselor remains in the building, and he gets a very good turnout. Not just EBD, but across the board. My EBD counselors really work well with the parents. We try to avoid outdoor suspensions, and CSI, by utilizing various resource people to. It's having a time out, sometimes that's all the student needs, is having a time out, just a cool-down period. It's really not a punishment, but just a period for them to pull themselves together a bit. Let's be real, they're where they are because of emotional needs. So, we're really sensitive to that, and we work very closely with those kids in trying to promote positive behavior and the demeanor in which we handle them. May have to be more patient than another student, we may be tolerant of a little bit more. But as far as the data, you don't want a lot of (suspensions), you don't want to say that's what you're doing with these children. You want to find other means. Otherwise we're not doing our jobs. And that's what I believe in. I don't believe that a child, just because of their behavior, and their behavior gets in the way of their academics, that you retain them for two or three years. I'm saying if we are doing our job, than we shouldn't even reach that point, that's what I'm trying to say.

**1.8 On a program level, what has been the most important thing you have done to impact the quality of educational programming for students with EBD, as a school principal?**

I would say, here, just, I'm thinking of many different things, but it goes back to the technology. Just equal access to things. We have two computer labs that they all can use. We place them, the way that we strategically place the kids is keeping in mind their grade level. I try not to mix grade levels. I try to keep subjects in their pure form, so that it's not watered down, the curriculum's not watered down. Nowadays you can't do that. Back years ago, when I first started teaching, it's often times what you did to accommodate these kids. But they're got to meet the same standards, you've got to maintain the rigor, to meet the emotional needs, and to provide the resources that they need, for the children. If I have an EH student who is a special diploma candidate, making sure that we have the curriculum to meet the needs, to access the curriculum access points. To meet the needs of all the kids in the classroom, and equal access to the same education that all of the other kids are getting. Their art class, the electives aren't any different. All the electives. I don't have adaptive PE, I don't have it. Even though I have a teacher who can teach it, he's EBD certified, I don't have that. They're mainstreamed right into the regular population. And I think that's what life is all about. They have to be able to...I know where they may end up five years from now, having come from a high school setting in the past, these kids need as much normalcy in their lives as possible.

**1.9 There are many district mandates, federal guidelines and policies with regards to students with EBD that do not allow much flexibility in educational programming. How does that impact the way you serve students with EBD?**

We serve them based on the needs and accommodations that are on their IEP, with absolutely no deviation. And when they test, we follow the same testing guidelines, if they're alternate assessment, if they're taking the FCAT, we make sure that everything is adhered to. It's the law. We've got to do the discipline, if it pertains to academics or discipline, we make sure that we comply with the IEP.

**1.10 How would you characterize your contribution to programs for students with EBD since you have been at your school?**

My contribution? Just that I get it. Nothing needs to be explained to me because I understand it. Having been there and done that. Having taught EH kids. I kind of get it. I have a sense of what the programmatic needs are. Of course, you keep up with the times, with the program changes as a principal. Even with the VE program, my contribution is that they'll always be a part of my school. I'm not one of those principals who stick them out in the cold. And the teachers, I'm very sensitive to their needs too, and their frustrations.

**Research Question Two:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

**2.1 In what ways would you describe the teacher's role in educating students with EBD?**

Oh, crucial. You've gotta have the right people in there. There are people that are certified, but the certification doesn't mean anything if they don't have common sense, understand these kids, understanding the needs of the kids. Because it's different. It's a whole different situation than is working with a low functioning kid that has learning disabilities. Some of these kids have several

different disabilities attached to them. So the teacher has to be the perfect match up or it's not going to work for the student, or the teacher. And the program will not be successful. And I'm very fortunate to say that I have two very outstanding teachers who work so well as a team. They support each other. The paras chime in. I'm very fortunate in that respect, because it's not always like that. I haven't mentioned parents, but that is important. They just, they are great teachers and I can't say enough about them. I'm very fortunate because they can make or break your program and success for the kids.

**2.2 What types of support do you, as an administrator, provide your teachers who work with students with EBD?**

Well, obviously I accommodate the IEPs, what I mean is that if they have to be taken out for staffings or transitional meetings, I accommodate them in that respect. Or PD. One of the previous questions that asked about some of the things I did, when I first got here, this whole inclusion had just started a year or two before that. So it wasn't so receptive to the rest of the staff. And we've gradually branched out more and more. This doesn't necessarily pertain to EBD, but I do have EBD who are out there. But I think that more and more teachers are buying in to the concept and accepting to this program in this school as well. Also, if there's a situation that needs one of us to go up and assist, or sit in on a staffing, or just, if there's a PD that they'd like to go to, or if they want us to intervene in a situation. We 100% support this program and those teachers. They're such awesome teachers, how could you not? And what they do is so amazing, and not anyone could do it. So you've got to support those teachers as an administrators. And we do, as an administrator. I know the question is about principals, but we all do. And another thing is, let's say a student did something really great, and they really want

us to recognize them, and give them an extra stroking, I'll sometimes call a parent and compliment a child to the parent on the phone, or say a nice thing, or write a note home. On the flip side, if they need our support with discipline, we do that too. But it works both ways.

### **2.3 Do you feel that your teachers who work with students with EBD suffer from occupational stress?**

Ha! Ha! I think we all do! Look, there are times that they are frustrated, and, you know, but they absolutely love it.

#### **2.3.2 If so, what are the causes of occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

Well, just the high maintenance of the whole thing. I mean, dealing with three different personalities all at the same time. It's just dealing with the issues that come with it. It's not just the exceptionality itself, but all the other issues that come along with it. It's not easy. Because sometimes you talk to a parent and they're not that rational, you know? Or their judgment is not as clear as it should be with their child. I mean, even with the Gen Ed population, with everything that the child brings to school. You know? And I believe that those issues sometimes frustrate. The paperwork frustrates them, all the documentation. Now, if you have to restrain a child, all the documentation that comes with that. Now we got an email from the district that if we think we have any "hot cases", that they want to know about it. Just all the different...I would say the most enjoyable part of the day would be working with the kids, it's all the other things, all that paperwork that comes along with those things, with these IEPs and things, because they share in that.

**2.3.3 If so, what do you do, as a principal, to reduce occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

We make sure they have subs and the time available. One of the things that we are brainstorming for next year is if I have extra funds to pay them hourly on Saturday to come and do some of that stuff. To compensate them. They teach, they both teach six periods, so it's hard. They're tied up. It's not like they have a planning period. But, of course, you know we do nice little warm fuzzy things. We buy them shirts, but we do that for the whole staff. Luncheons, you know, breakfasts, things for the staff in general, not just them. And we tell them we appreciate them. Just yesterday I was telling my EBD teacher how much I appreciate all of them. And my department chair today, all the hard work that they do, I tell them. You take that time and you reinforce that because these are the people that will make you or break you.

**2.4 What types of support are necessary to work with students with EBD as it pertains to (teacher retention, job satisfaction, occupational stress)?**

Having the resource people there when they need them to support their efforts. The technology. All the resources that they need. And the personnel, the support personnel. The paras, the clinicians, it would have been nice to have the art therapist back, but, you know, there's curriculum and department chair.

**2.5 What practices have been most effective in supporting teachers in programs for students with EBD?**

Again, making sure that they have all the tools that they need. That their curriculum is aligned with the general ed curriculum. If the child's going for a standard diploma, obviously. And all the tools and resources. The same things that everyone else has, ensuring that they have it too.

They meet with their subject area, I guess that would be more along the lines of support within the department, but the SPED teachers too, they support each other. They meet on a regular basis as a department, within their respective departments, but they both teach two subject areas. So one might go with one department one week, the other week, you know, making them feel a part of the whole school, getting support from their colleagues, and sharing ideas and materials.

**2.6 How do you use professional development to ensure that teachers of students with EBD are prepared for the challenges they will face?**

Making sure that they're familiar with all of the changes on the FCAT. Making sure that they're familiar with the textbooks. Making sure that they have access to programs like Discovery Learning, Gizmos, if they teach science. One of the things that they do do too, which goes back to a previous question, for example, if my EBD teacher is doing a lab, will relocate her students to a lab room, which would be more conducive. Working with a Gen Ed teacher. Or, sometimes they team-teach together, and she brings her students into the Gen Ed setting and they'll do a lab together. They support each other. Those are some of the additional supports.

**2.7 How would you describe the level of teacher preparation for newly hired teachers in classrooms for students with EBD, and what do you do about it?**

The level of teacher prep for newly hired teachers? Ensuring that they are familiar with what the program is, the needs of the kids, what resources might be available to them to provide that additional support, who they are, the resource people, and knowing that they can turn to them, access to these individuals. They may need our intervention to facilitate that sometimes. I don't have any new people, but that's what I would do if I did. **Research Question Three:**

3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:



a. Allotment of budgetary resources

b. Disciplinary assistance

*Guiding Questions:*

**3.1 How do you ensure that your students with EBD are being served in the least restrictive environment?**

Again, the ultimate goal is mainstreaming. I've said that earlier. But trying to get them ready for the real world. I've had kids in here, "Well, I'm ADHD". Well, guess what, if you get stopped by a police officer, they're not going to care if you're ADHD. If you say the wrong thing, it's teaching them real-world applications because sometimes these kids are detached from that, for whatever reason. Trying to make things real-world. And, of course, just getting them ready. The teacher ensuring. We do the online career EPEP, all the kids do that. We have career days. They participate in that. I believe in real-world. Even with parents, because sometimes they tend to think that these behaviors will be socially acceptable, but they're not. If they're being punished, they're not. We try to be direct and teach kids real-world, what do you do if you're feeling this way. A lot of what we do, even as administrators, with these kids if they come to us, we're counselors. We talk to them. How do you control your behavior? If you feel yourself losing it, what can you do? Strategies. Real-world applications. You can't do this in the real world. You've got to be in control of your behavior.

**3.2 How do you use data to guide the placement of students with EBD?**

Like I said, we try to group them by ability level. Not just their exceptionality, by grade and by ability level, depending on their levels and their grade. We use differentiated instruction. If we have an upper level EBD student that really excels in, say, math, we'll try to maybe try an

inclusion class with them, where we can move them on, and not hold them back. But, obviously, lots of times what goes on in there, they do a lot of cooperative learning groups, and things of that nature in there. But I do believe in moving kids up and out, if they can handle it. I'll even try it out if I think that child's at that level, at that maturity level where they can handle it, that it won't set them off. Because we know what change does...haha...we found that out this week!

### **3.3 What behavior modification techniques do you use that are effective in maximizing behavioral and academic success for students with EBD?**

Well we have a point system, the point sheets that they use throughout the course of the day, target behaviors, effort, academic success, and the teachers sometimes also write notes in the journal or we'll send home a note. Or just call them right there on the spot if they need to. And, like I said, even at our end of the year awards assembly. We have these kids receiving awards, we don't identify it as such, but we make sure that they are part of the group. Because I like to give them, as many as deserve it, as many as possible, across all subject areas. Or turnaround awards. We always make sure that our entire SPED department is included in that, to include the EBD.

### **3.4 What is your role in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary interventions are used for students with EBD?**

Obviously I've got to ensure that district, federal, state guidelines are being met. Procedures are being followed. Because that dictates all of it. For all students. Lots of times these things will go to, when it comes to disciplinary issues, you go to the assistant principal. That doesn't mean that it doesn't ever come to me. If I see a child coming in, or an EBD child coming in, I'll go over and talk to them. I may not necessarily be the one to, "OK, you're suspended". But sometimes I

am. Sometimes I am. And we play good-guy, bad-guy. Walking around the halls. Visibility, which helps to deter disciplinary issues as well. Especially if you know their name, areas of interest, if they're artistic or musically inclined. We do have some that are in band. Very successful, functioning well.

### **3.5 How do you ensure access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD?**

PD, the end of the year awards ceremony. They're involved in every aspect. There are very few of them that are escorted class to class. That's another disciplinary tool that we use that is an extreme, over an outdoor. If we see that a child is really getting into trouble in the hallways or something, we'll put them on a temporary basis where a para will escort them from class to class until they settle down and realize. Not necessarily holding their hand, but walking a little bit behind them monitoring, supervision in the hallways if we need to tighten things up. If we see that that is a need, if we see that a child is getting to the most trouble during the change of calss, well, I'm not going to put them in CSI for that. We'll monitor them, we'll take them for a time-out with a para to the library or something. It's a disciplinary action that isn't punitive. I think I covered access to the gen ed curriculum, what my philosophy is on that. It's the ultimate goal. We've got to get them ready for the real-world. Because there's no EBD program in the real world. You know, if we're doing our job, that's where we're going to get them.

### **3.6 How do you allot budgetary resources so that they may impact students with EBD?**

Well, you know, they have their SPED funds and their IDEA funds when we get them, if we get them. And they utilize them for school busses for field trips, to buy resources, little extra things that they want to get with that money for the kids. They may see a workbook that they want to get for, maybe, a lower functioning student. But they work together as a team and they kind of

make those decisions as a team amongst themselves, the teachers do. And I don't take that money. That's their money to use for their program. And there are times when they have asked me for things and I've bought it out of school funds to support them, like the Promethian boards, things like that. We have an after care program. They are involved with that, full access. We have an All Stars program on a grant, and it's free after-care until 6:15, and we have several of the kids in there. And what's nice there is that some of the teachers who are teaching it are also SPED teachers. So the kids are still getting full support even after-hours and in tutorial programs. If they come to our Saturday programs, we don't have any EBD teachers necessarily working there, though I do this Saturday school that we have coming up, I do have one EBD teacher there, but she'll be teaching all of the children Language Arts, including them. So they have equal access, every child has equal access to us. Even when we target populations based on our data school-wide, I never turn a child away that wants to come to any of these. There are sports activities after school. We have an EBD student who just made the baseball team, wrestling, I have a few of them. Future champions!

### **3.7 Beyond administrative support, what is your role in assisting teachers of students with EBD?**

My role is just to be there, support their efforts. Make sure they have the resources. That would be my role for every teacher. To ensure that they have what they need to do their job to the best of their ability. And that goes across the board, EBD, VE, SPED, inclusion, gen ed, gifted, my Cambridge kids, all students.

## P-5 Interview Transcription

### Research Questions and Guiding Questions

#### **Research Question One:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

#### **1.1 What is your philosophy of education as it relates to programming for students with EBD?**

Well, first of all I think everybody's entitled to an education. And we try to treat our students in the EBD program just like we treat our regular ed. students. I don't know if its because we've been very fortunate because our EBD students are very high, so they work very well. And as a result of the FCAT scores, you can see some of my EBD scores probably outscore a lot of my regular ed students. So, yeah, they have some behavioral problems, but as far as being able to learn and contribute and be successful, they can do just as well as any student.

#### **1.2 How have you used programmatic data, behavioral and academic, to ensure that your programs for students with EBD are successful?**

Well, with the data, you know, that's what drives our program. Not only regular ed programs, but also students with disabilities. We use that same data to place students with disabilities. We use that same data to place students who need help in math, or other areas, and we target those areas. The data, it's data driven. And we've been very successful with it in providing those students with an education and helping them to be very successful.

**1.3 How is progress measured for the programs for students with EBD at your school?**

I think they look at a couple of things. I think the results, how they are scoring on the tests, the number of referrals that a student gets. We're also a pilot behavior school, a behavioral school, in fact we won a gold medal for the 2010-2011 school year for our positive behavior school. Our suspensions have gone down dramatically. I mean, just on eighth grade I can tell you right now this year, the number of referrals that we've gotten, general ed. and EBD students this year, I could probably count on one hand the number of students that have been placed on an outdoor suspension for eighth grade. And it's a little bit higher for seventh and sixth, but, you know, I think they're being very successful because those kids that are in eighth grade now have been through the PBS for the three years we have been utilizing it.

**1.4 How would you describe the programs that your school provides for students with EBD?**

This school has always had a very strong EBD program. The teachers that have been here have always been top notch. And I think that's probably been the key. They're well-versed, and they know what works and what doesn't work with these kids. They always have worked with a point system. They've been the ones who've really been behind the positive reward system, and it's been driving. They do a lot of workshops and professional development for the rest of the staff on that, and I think that's been key for that program and making it so successful.

**1.5 What practices have you implemented with your programs for students with EBD that have contributed to their success?**

I just provide them the support, really. And let them know that if there's anything that I can do to assist them to accomplish their goals, and making these kids successful to go on and graduate and go on to high school and graduate, and get a diploma, that's what I'm here for. I'm here to provide the assistance and make sure that if there's any obstacles there, to help remove them.

**1.6 What changes have you had to make to improve the quality of the programs for students with EBD at your school, and what prompted you to make those changes?**

I don't think I've really made a lot of changes. I've done some changes as far as personnel. You know, like to see which ones fit best in certain programs. Whether it be to put them in the SPED program, or the EBD program, and make some adjustments there. But other than that, they've been phenomenal.

**1.7 With regards to your programs for students with EBD, what does the data tell you about disciplinary referral rates and out of school suspensions, and how has this data informed the administrative practices for the programs?**

Again, here we're talking about disciplinary referrals. Most students in the EBD program probably have a lower percentage rate of suspensions out of school, suspensions in school than my gen ed program. And the way we keep track of it is, with the positive behavior support program, they have a program called SWISS, which keeps all that data. And we constantly are going back and looking at that. Looking at how many kids have been placed on an indoor suspension, how many have been on an outdoor suspension, how many are reg ed students, how many are EBD students, and so forth. And just, you know, monitoring that data and looking at the trends on it.

**1.8 On a program level, what has been the most important thing you have done to impact the quality of educational programming for students with EBD, as a school principal?**

On a program level, I think just being visible. Going into the classroom. Letting the students know who I am. Interacting with them to let them know that I'm a person here as well. I have the open door. Any of them feel they need to come speak with me, they do that. Just maintain a level of visibility, going into the programs and letting them see me.

**1.9 There are many district mandates, federal guidelines and policies with regards to students with EBD that do not allow much flexibility in educational programming. How does that impact the way you serve students with EBD?**

Well, I mean, yea, there's been mandates that are federal, you know, mandates and so forth that we need to follow, make sure that, you know, the IEPs, we're providing everything for these students. But also the least restrictive environment. I don't know if it really restricts us, but it gives us a guide that we need to follow to make sure that everybody's rights are being followed, that you're not abusing anybody's rights. And, you know, these students, you know, yes they have a disability, but they are a person and they have rights as well. And, you know, they can be a very productive person in society as well.

**1.10 How would you characterize your contribution to programs for students with EBD since you have been at your school?**

A strong supporter. A strong supporter for the EBD students. I would say I'm an advocate for them. Again, if you walked into one of these programs here, these EBD programs here, many people have come to this school and gone into their classes, and they didn't even know it was an EBD class setting.



## **Research Question Two:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

### **2.1 In what ways would you describe the teacher's role in educating students with EBD?**

Well, they are the one who is going to set the tone of the classroom and, again, they, I'll try to pick the best teachers for those programs. Because it's a challenge, you know, to work with these students. But, again, it takes a special person. And you have to be able to identify those traits in people to put them in charge of those classrooms.

### **2.2 What types of support do you, as an administrator, provide your teachers who work with students with EBD?**

I provide them whatever support I can. And anything they ask for I give them.

### **2.3 Do you feel that your teachers who work with students with EBD suffer from occupational stress?**

No, I don't think so. I know that, first of all, they all love what they do. Otherwise they wouldn't be doing it. But all occupations have stress, and no matter what level you are teaching at, or what type of job you are doing, they all have stress. But I don't feel that they are stressed out any more so than the general ed population.

#### **2.3.1 If not, what do you do as a principal to eliminate occupational stress for teachers of students with EBD?**

Again, I think they're the ones that set that atmosphere. They're the ones who make all the difference. They're in the trenches. They're dealing with that every day.

**2.4 What types of support are necessary to work with students with EBD as it pertains to (teacher retention, job satisfaction, occupational stress)?**

Well, I provide a lot of support. I know that they need assistance with providing them with time to do the IEPs, with planning, I mean, they are asked to do a lot. Just to sit down and conduct these IEPs takes a lot of time. And them being pulled out of the classroom to do that a lot of times, it's difficult. So I think, you know, if there's any way you could provide personnel to assist in that fashion, or assist in that matter, that would help them a lot. They are always asked to be doing the IEPs and filling out extra paperwork and documentation. Because it's so, you know, rigid, as far as you've got to meet all these guidelines, with federal funds attached to it, and all these kinds of things.

**2.5 What practices have been most effective in supporting teachers in programs for students with EBD?**

Well, it's a juggling act. Especially now with the economic times that we're in. Putting substitutes in to provide relief time for them to be able to do some of these things. Being able to manipulate your master schedule somewhat so that you can have a teacher, like a program specialist assist in that also. So, yea, you have to be creative and think outside of the box, for me, to help that.

**2.6 How do you use professional development to ensure that teachers of students with EBD are prepared for the challenges they will face?**

Well, if there's professional development that's being offered by the district for them to go to, I allow them to go to that. Even if there's not substitute funds attached to it, you know, I cover it with my substitute funds. If I'm able to do a professional development here in school on the early

release days, I conduct professional development in smaller groups because not everybody's going to do the EBD, it's probably just going to be for their program. And provide them with the tools and support to do that.

**2.7 How would you describe the level of teacher preparation for newly hired teachers in classrooms for students with EBD, and what do you do about it?**

I think they come pretty well prepared. I know that a lot of times I end up picking some of the teachers if I have a vacancy open based on the training they got on the college level, but also their internship. A lot of them have come here because I have the program, and have lots of interns. So they intern here in this program, and if there's somebody who looks good, and I know that I'm going to have a position available, then, you know, I kind of watch them and get feedback from the teachers. "Hey, what do you think about this person? How are they doing in that program? Do you think this is a candidate for somebody we should look at in the future?"

**Research Question Three:**

3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:

- a. Allotment of budgetary resources
- b. Disciplinary assistance

*Guiding Questions:*

**3.1 How do you ensure that your students with EBD are being served in the least restrictive environment?**

Again, this, a lot of this is based on the recommendation from the IEP. Who we think can work well in a gen ed class. We do it progressively. Maybe not just throw them into a general ed class. We have a lot of inclusion classes here, so many of mine are in inclusion classes. Some of them

function very well without the support of the ESE teacher. I have some that have gone beyond that level and they're in regular general ed classes. And just monitor their grades, and make sure they're doing well, and being able to handle the material.

### **3.2 How do you use data to guide the placement of students with EBD?**

Again, we're data driven, so we're constantly looking at data. And, you know, look at those students particularly to see how they're performing as it compares to the other students.

### **3.3 What behavior modification techniques do you use that are effective in maximizing behavioral and academic success for students with EBD?**

Oh, there's a lot of behavior management techniques that the teachers use. A lot of them. They use a lot of techniques, time out, point systems, they have point stores. A lot of them just need a cooling off period. Many times those students, you know, depending on what their disability is, some of them just can't cope well with, maybe, a female figure, or a man figure. Sometimes just bringing in, you know, a man figure. So a lot of times it's just bringing in a man figure. Today we had one with a female. She just doesn't do well with females. So to, kind of, diffuse it, we have a male person come in and speak with that child. And usually they're able to diffuse it right away. It's knowing your students. It's knowing who they are. You know, you can't get in their face, type of thing. You back them into a corner and there's only one way out, and that's lashing out at you.

### **3.4 What is your role in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary interventions are used for students with EBD?**

Well, again. All of this falls on the principal, right (laughs)? But usually the assistant principals deal with it. I do see most of it, that goes on, because it happens in the office. And they usually

keep me pretty much posted on whatever events take place. But my role is, you know, unless somebody, a lot of times somebody will come to me and say, “What do you think I should do?”, and I’ll give them my opinion, or I’ll tell them what I think they should do. But, again, my students, the program here, they’re not very much different from my general ed population. They do very well, I’m telling you, my suspension rate is really, really good this year. It’s being in programs like this, the positive behavior support. It’s not only behavioral, it’s also academic, to use PBS. It works. That program, it’s shown a lot of really good results. And that’s why we’re a model school. In fact, the behavior management teacher that we had, she’s now at (another school), she’s done a lot of workshops for (another administrator) throughout the district. And they always use our school as an example. And I’ve gone and spoken to some of these groups, and I tell them, “Hey, It works. It’s working”. So, it is an excellent program. And if you use it with fidelity, it works.

### **3.5 How do you ensure access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD?**

I mainstream them into the general ed classes. Again, we do have a lot of inclusion classes. I don’t even have resource, so they go into, you know, the general ed classes, or an inclusion setting, and there’s some of them in those classes that we feel can go into a general ed class without it, without an inclusion teacher in there, then we put them in there.

### **3.6 How do you allot budgetary resources so that they may impact students with EBD?**

That’s a good one. Because right now with the budget, your hand is pretty much tied. There’s only so much you can do. But we try to manipulate it the best way that we can with regards to the inclusion classes, and setting those up. We get some grant funds for PBS. We also, I have one

teacher, my EBD teacher, she's written a couple of grants. We got a Lowes grant. She's doing career lab with the funds from that one. But as far as the allotted budget, it's tight.

**3.7 Beyond administrative support, what is your role in assisting teachers of students with EBD?**

I guess just, you know, again, they know I have an open door. My door's open all day long. They know they can come in here. They all have phones in their classrooms, they know they can dial my extension, I'll pick it up. I'm there to help them, you know? I'm constantly going down into the classrooms. Just being available for them, letting them know that I'm there if they need me. Moral support.

## P-6 Interview Transcription

### Research Questions and Guiding Questions

#### **Research Question One:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, implement practices, programs, or changes that positively impact their programs for students with EBD?

#### *Guiding Questions:*

##### **1.1 What is your philosophy of education as it relates to programming for students with EBD?**

With the EBD Kids here, those are kids who have, usually they can perform at the same level as the other kids. You just have to accommodate them, you have to have accommodations for them, to try to make them, to bring them into the general population as much as possible. And to let them be successful. A lot of that has to do with teaching them how to deal, and how to recognize when they're going to have a behavioral issue, or that they're losing control or something like that.

##### **1.2 How have you used programmatic data, behavioral and academic, to ensure that your programs for students with EBD are successful?**

We look a couple of places. One, the IEP meetings are used, it's where most of this stuff comes together. And then we have the anecdotal issues that take place, the referrals that are sent out, and the teachers that are coming in saying, "Look, I've got this other concern". But usually when we are getting ready for an IEP meeting, we gather all that information together and we have a good conversation and we make accommodations based on that.

**1.3 How is progress measured for the programs for students with EBD at your school?**

Sometimes day to day. You know, it's more of an individualized basis. And on day to day, you can have a kid whose actually working out pretty well in a general ed population, and then there's been a problem, and then another one, and then another one, that's when we have to say, "OK, we're in the wrong place. We've got to go back and fix this so that this kid can function."

**1.4 How would you describe the programs that your school provides for students with EBD?**

Overall I think I have a very good program. I have a large program, we have four units. We get to know the kids pretty well. We are pretty happy that we've been able to put a lot of the kids, a majority of the kids in our inclusion courses. And they're functioning fairly well. Every once in a while I have an issue, but for the most part they're pretty good. Our teachers who teach, the three teachers we actually have in our self-contained unit, they're very close with their kids. They're very close with their kids and they know the parents. And, you know, they have their issues, the kids have their issues. But the teachers know their kids, and they know them well.

**1.5 What practices have you implemented with your programs for students with EBD that have contributed to their success?**

I think giving the teachers the leeway and a voice, including the kids in their IEP meetings. Talking honestly with the kids about wanting to get out of the EBD program. They don't want to be labeled EBD, they know they are labeled EBD. That we're trying to build their self esteem at the same time. It's a big group of people, really getting together to talk, especially for one student.



**1.6 What changes have you had to make to improve the quality of the programs for students with EBD at your school, and what prompted you to make those changes?**

Two changes. One was, has been funding, as an issue. The other one has been, having the kids be more incorporated in the general population. In the past, these students weren't invited to pep rallies because the class, as a whole, was not performing well. We had to make some personnel changes in the teachers who were teaching these kids. Because you need charismatic, dynamic people to be able to deal with them and their issues. And for a long time, those were the kids who were left there, and the teachers who would make the least amount of problems would take them. And they weren't structured very well, and there were issues with that. I think personnel was the biggest. The big, big issue here.

**1.7 With regards to your programs for students with EBD, what does the data tell you about disciplinary referral rates and out of school suspensions, and how has this data informed the administrative practices for the programs?**

Well, we still have a good number of them that do get into trouble. And we do, you know, we suspend, and we exclude from school until the parents come in. Sometimes you have to twist the parents arm for them to come in. We get the referrals, and we don't get a lot of them, the teachers are pretty good about it. Usually the regular ed teachers are the ones that at first have an issue. You know, the student has an issue, and they don't now how to deal with it. And they, they think we're going to take the student, and they want the kid suspended for ten days, and, "this student can't be in my class anymore". And it takes some education with the teachers. But we do have suspensions, and we do have some that are habitual, are suspended on a regular basis. And that calls for, when they accumulate a certain number of days we have to have the manifestation,

and the meetings, and all that good stuff. But we have a good number of them that still get themselves in trouble, and we try to come up with alternatives to the suspension. Have a Saturday school where t they come in and clean up, or we put them on work detail for a day. We do little things that, sending them home doesn't help much. So we try to keep them in school. We try to do something that will be positive that will get them to, "Kid. Turn around!"

**1.8 On a program level, what has been the most important thing you have done to impact the quality of educational programming for students with EBD, as a school principal?**

I think, for me personally, it's been the personnel change. Bringing in new people.

**1.9 There are many district mandates, federal guidelines and policies with regards to students with EBD that do not allow much flexibility in educational programming. How does that impact the way you serve students with EBD?**

You know, the mandates, and the policies, and those things, we have to work with them. And sometimes you have to find the gray area. You have to find the gray area and you have to work with that. We try, we try to meet all the guidelines and policies, but in all honesty, we don't always. We don't always. We do the best we can. And usually the biggest issue that we have when it comes to federal and state guidelines and mandates is the paperwork. The paperwork that provides the appropriate funding. That's the biggest issue, I think.

**1.10 How would you characterize your contribution to programs for students with EBD since you have been at your school?**

I've gotten to know the kids pretty well. That's how I actually get to know them. Because I've seen them in trouble. (Laughs). You know, we have one kid here, Frankie, and Frankie is in here every other period. Whenever he can, he comes in. And he comes in to my office. "Frankie, why

are you here?” “Oh, I just came to say hi.” “Where are you supposed to be, Frankie?” “In this or that class.” “Well, why are you here?” “Oh, I just wanted to get out.” You know, so we’ve got to work with Frankie on, “You need to stay in your classroom”. You’ve got to come and walk with him to class and talk to his teachers, “Don’t let him go out, he doesn’t need to go out, he needs to stay in class”. And deal with that. But I think putting a human touch to it, and I guess that’s bringing in those people that know how to work with them. The personnel.

### **Research Question Two:**

How do principals, who exceed district standards on their annual performance evaluation, support their teachers of students with EBD?

*Guiding Questions:*

#### **2.1 In what ways would you describe the teacher’s role in educating students with EBD?**

The most critical aspect of the whole thing. That’s the most critical aspect of the whole thing. You’ve got to have good teachers that know what they’re doing. And you’ve got to provide them with the materials and the support that they need to be able to do their job, and do it right.

#### **2.2 What types of support do you, as an administrator, provide your teachers who work with students with EBD?**

I give them, literally, anything that they need. If they tell me they need something that is going to improve whatever it is that they are trying to work with, I’m going to find the money somewhere, somehow to get it done.

#### **2.3 Do you feel that your teachers who work with students with EBD suffer from occupational stress?**

Yes.

### **2.3.2 If so, what are the causes of occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

Those kids can be tough. They can be tough at times, you know, and it's a mental stress. It's not a physical thing. It's more of a mental stress. And having to deal with, you know, trying to keep your cool when the kid is out of control. A kid is all hot-headed and free and doing things, and... We had a teacher here earlier this year, I want to say in October, November, who got punched in the face by a kid. And she maintained her cool. She actually told me it wasn't the kid's fault. And, other teachers, "You should press charges", and the other teachers are telling her. And she's, "No, it was my fault, I did this". And I think, "Wow". But, it's stressful on them. And there's a lot of emotions that go into play. And the teachers know it. Teachers invest a lot of emotional equity into these kids. And when one of them has an episode, and is out of control, they take it personally. "It's them." "They should have done, they didn't do, they didn't see." It's what I see in the teachers we have here.

### **2.3.3 If so, what do you do, as a principal, to reduce occupational stress among your teachers of students with EBD?**

That's a tough one. You know, I, I'm a very hands-on principal. I do not like sitting in my office. It's talking to them, "Are you ok? What do you need?" Making sure they know that I'm supporting them. If they just need some time away from the kids, we'll find a sub for the teacher, or someone to take her classroom. I think that's what, that's basically all I can do. Because I can't... I wish I could pay them more, or do other things, but I can't. So I gotta help with a human touch.

**2.4 What types of support are necessary to work with students with EBD as it pertains to (teacher retention, job satisfaction, occupational stress)?**

Patience. They need lots of patience. The teachers, really the teachers need to feel that they are valued. That they are important. They are important to the whole function of the school, not just to that one little class. They have to feel involved. They have to feel that their voice is heard and considered. And when they want to try to do something we give them the leeway to do so. I think giving them a sense of autonomy is important.

**2.5 What practices have been most effective in supporting teachers in programs for students with EBD?**

I think I answered that one. It's, they've got to feel empowered to make decisions and know that they're going to be supported when they make those decisions. And they have to, they have to feel comfortable with asking for things, and they only get that with the contact with them. It's all hands-on. You've gotta be there, you've gotta talk to them, you've gotta support them, you've gotta provide that guidance for them. And, you know, be that shoulder that they cry on when they've had a rough day with their kids. I think, you've gotta put a human face to it, and look at it that way.

**2.6 How do you use professional development to ensure that teachers of students with EBD are prepared for the challenges they will face?**

The district is pretty good about providing PD. Restraining kids, and how to deal with alternative assessments. And you've got to, if you're going to provide a teacher with professional development it has to be something they can actually use. They can come back the next day to class and use. It's got to be meaningful to them, and to what they're doing, and what they're

working with. And it's tough to find that because a lot of times the district provides funding for some kind of PD, and a lot of money is invested, and it's a bear for teachers to implement. So, it needs to be something that is simple to use, and something that has value to it. You know, the teachers have to buy into it. If they can't get that from the PD, it totally a waste.

**2.7 How would you describe the level of teacher preparation for newly hired teachers in classrooms for students with EBD, and what do you do about it?**

I can't really answer that because I haven't hired any brand-new teachers for the EBD program.

The teachers that I have are teachers that I've picked up from other schools.

**Research Question Three:**

3. How have the following administrative practices impacted students with EBD:

- a. Allotment of budgetary resources
- b. Disciplinary assistance

*Guiding Questions:*

**3.1 How do you ensure that your students with EBD are being served in the least restrictive environment?**

The IEP. The IEP is the main one. And when we talk to the parents, they'll mention. Some of the parents are very knowledgeable about their rights. And they'll mention that, "My child is not in the least restrictive environment. My child can handle a regular class. He doesn't feel challenged in this class". So then we'll go back to the table and look at what our options are and what would be best for the child. Because some parents do have a false sense of what their child is capable of. A lot of times the ESE classes, the curriculum is so watered down that the kids can get bored and get in trouble.

### **3.2 How do you use data to guide the placement of students with EBD?**

We look at how they perform in class. How they perform academically. We look at how they are doing socially. How well they can control their emotions. And whether or no we feel they're going to be safe, or the student body will be safe in another class. Some of our kids are big, strong kids that can really hurt someone, especially if they get out of control. I keep using that term, that they lose control...

### **3.3 What behavior modification techniques do you use that are effective in maximizing behavioral and academic success for students with EBD?**

Well, what I have found is that once they calm down, and I do this often, I'll have a kid following me the whole day. For the rest of the day. I know he's not going to do well in CSI, and I can't send him back to class, but I'll have him here. You know, "Ok, let's file these papers, we gotta staple these things". And I have them do something totally off topic, doesn't have anything to do with the class. And after a half-hour, forty-five minutes, they've calmed down enough where, "Ok, let's talk about what happened". And that seems to work, and each of my administrators, they all do the same thing. Though I have one that just deals with ESE issues, the others jump in, and they do it. I think you can go to any one of my assistant principals and say, "Name five of our EBD students", and they could. It works, it really works.

### **3.4 What is your role in ensuring that appropriate disciplinary interventions are used for students with EBD?**

My role with them is, I have to make sure that my assistant principal knows what he's doing, and how he's doing it. And when there's an issue that they're not sure, I make sure that the paraprofessionals are involved, and I make sure that the classroom teachers, their EBD teachers,

are involved as well. I'm fortunate that my assistant principal has been an assistant principal for a number of years, and he's been dealing with these types of students for a while. So he's pretty good about being able to tell, you know, "This is a kid I can push this way, and this one I can't". And a lot of, it's all based on the issues as well. Why does one get put in CSI for two days, and another suspended? And that becomes an issue. For the most part I think it has to do with the experience and being able to communicate with others when you're not sure how to handle one of these situations. At times, how to handle a parent when they come in.

**3.5 How do you ensure access to the general education curriculum for students with EBD?**

The IEP meeting and the staffing. Using their data, and social skills.

**3.6 How do you allot budgetary resources so that they may impact students with EBD?**

We have, the funding that is provided by the district for our special ed programs. And usually what I do, I take a portion of it and divide it among the teachers and I say, "What do you need? You have this much money." And they'll tell me what they need. Paraprofessionals, we have several paraprofessionals. Field trips and things that take money. We do a lot of that. Take them to different places, for instance. And if I don't have the funding through the special ed, I'll use the general ed funds for that.

**3.7 Beyond administrative support, what is your role in assisting teachers of students with EBD?**

You know, I don't know. You know, I go and I talk to them. Having them be approachable to share with you, and talking to you, and more being more of a people thing than an administrator thing. Even when they've had a bad day, "Hey, is everything OK? You going to be OK? You've



got a good long weekend coming up.” That kind of thing. More of a cheerleader kind of thing. I think that goes a long way. More of an emotional support.

## **APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SUMMARIES**

## Summary of Qualitative Research

P-1

The following is a summary of the interview that I conducted regarding the principal's role in supporting students with EBD and their teachers. Please review the bulleted points below, as they are the themes that emerged from transcribed interview data.

### **Programs for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **includes students with EBD with the general education population.**
- **provides access to general education curriculum in programs for students with EBD.**
- **supports the use of a points-based positive reinforcement system for behavior for students with EBD.**
- **has made changes to improve the quality of instruction in programs for students with EBD.**
- **uses data to inform instruction and placement for students with EBD.**

### **Teachers of students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **relies on the professional abilities of the teachers of students with EBD.**
- **regards teachers of students with EBD as valued contributing members to the general school faculty.**
- **has empathetic awareness of the challenges of teaching students with EBD.**
- **prioritizes the professional needs of teachers of students with EBD.**
- **supports teachers of students with EBD with professional development.**
- **supports teachers of students with EBD through personal communication.**

### **Administrative issues for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **fights to maintain a high quality program for students with EBD amid policy and funding changes.**
- **uses alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with EBD.**

Thank you for participating in this qualitative study. If you have questions or concerns about the themes that have been identified from the transcribed interview data, please contact me via email at [TomUhle@Dadeschools.net](mailto:TomUhle@Dadeschools.net). If necessary, we can arrange a follow-up interview to clarify any of this information.

## Summary of Qualitative Research

P-2

The following is a summary of the interview that I conducted regarding the principal's role in supporting students with EBD and their teachers. Please review the bulleted points below, as they are the themes that emerged from transcribed interview data.

### **Programs for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **ensures that students with EBD are served in the least restrictive environment, including the general education class setting when appropriate.**
- **uses data to inform placement for students with EBD.**
- **supports the use of a points-based positive reinforcement system for behavior for students with EBD.**

### **Teachers of students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **selects teachers who have personality traits that help them positively impact students with EBD academically and socially.**
- **supports teachers by providing resources and personnel.**
- **supports teachers by encouraging professional development.**
- **feels empathy for teachers of students with EBD and provides emotional support through direct interaction with teachers and students.**
- **supports teachers of students with EBD by including them as valued members of the general school faculty.**

### **Administrative issues for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **uses alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with EBD.**

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## Summary of Qualitative Research

P-3

The following is a summary of the interview that I conducted regarding the principal's role in supporting students with EBD and their teachers. Please review the bulleted points below, as they are the themes that emerged from transcribed interview data.

### **Programs for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **includes students with EBD in the general education setting.**
- **has a program for students with EBD that uses a points-based positive reinforcement system.**
- **uses data to inform placement for students with EBD.**

### **Teachers of students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **supports teachers with supplies and resources, and through personal visits and accessibility.**
- **hand-selects teachers who implement a grade-level curriculum and have personalities which are compatible with students with EBD.**
- **encourages teachers of students with EBD to attend professional development activities to enhance instruction.**
- **includes teachers of students with EBD in general education department meetings.**

### **Administrative issues for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **The principal uses alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with EBD.**
- **The principal finds creative ways to ensure maximum funding for programs for students with EBD.**

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## Summary of Qualitative Research

P-4

The following is a summary of the interview that I conducted regarding the principal's role in supporting students with EBD and their teachers. Please review the bulleted points below, as they are the themes that emerged from transcribed interview data.

### **Programs for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **includes students with EBD with the general education population.**
- **has in place a points-based positive behavior management system.**
- **provides access to technology for students with EBD.**
- **provides access to the general education curriculum for programs for students with EBD.**
- **uses data to inform placement for students with EBD.**
- **strives to prepare students with EBD for the "real world".**

### **Teachers of students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **matches students with EBD with highly-skilled, compatible teachers.**
- **supports teachers of students with EBD by providing tools, resources, and extra time to complete necessary paperwork.**
- **includes teachers of students with EBD in general education subject area department meetings.**
- **has empathy for teachers of students with EBD.**
- **supports teachers of students with EBD with personnel support.**

### **Administrative issues for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **uses budgetary resources to enhance programming for students with EBD**
- **uses alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with EBD**

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## Summary of Qualitative Research

P-5

The following is a summary of the interview that I conducted regarding the principal's role in supporting students with EBD and their teachers. Please review the bulleted points below, as they are the themes that emerged from transcribed interview data.

### **Programs for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **has a positive attitude regarding programs for students with EBD.**
- **treats programs for students with EBD the same as the general education setting.**
- **maintains a level of visibility with programs for students with EBD.**
- **uses data to inform instruction and placement for students with EBD.**
- **Principal includes students with EBD in the general education setting.**
- **has implemented a Positive Behavior Support system school-wide.**

### **Teachers of students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **has made personnel changes to match compatible teachers with students with EBD.**
- **supports teachers of students with EBD through the allotment of tools, resources, and professional assistance.**
- **provides teachers of students with EBD extra time to tend to paperwork and meetings.**
- **hand-selects teachers of students with EBD based on their skills.**
- **has created an environment where occupational stress for teachers of students with EBD is not prevalent.**
- **uses professional development to support teachers of students with EBD.**
- **assists teachers by offering moral support, and an open-door policy.**

### **Administrative issues for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **seeks alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with EBD.**
- **has had to find innovative ways to allot budgetary resources for students with EBD.**

Thank you for participating in this qualitative study. If you have questions or concerns about the themes that have been identified from the transcribed interview data, please contact me via email at [TomUhle@Dadeschools.net](mailto:TomUhle@Dadeschools.net). If necessary, we can arrange a follow-up interview to clarify any of this information.

## Summary of Qualitative Research

P-6

The following is a summary of the interview that I conducted regarding the principal's role in supporting students with EBD and their teachers. Please review the bulleted points below, as they are the themes that emerged from transcribed interview data.

### **Programs for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **has made changes to provide greater access to the general education setting for students with EBD.**
- **uses available data and input to inform student placement in programs for students with EBD.**

### **Teachers of students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **has made personnel changes in programs for students with EBD to match students with compatible teachers.**
- **supports teachers by providing tools and resources.**
- **supports teachers with emotional support.**
- **supports teachers of students with EBD by encouraging them to attend professional development activities that are useful in the classroom.**

### **Administrative issues for students with EBD.**

#### **The school principal:**

- **uses alternatives to out-of-school suspension whenever possible.**
- **uses out-of-school suspension for students with EBD.**
- **has to find creative ways to work with federal and state mandates and policies, especially those tied to funding for students with EBD.**

Thank you for participating in this qualitative study. If you have questions or concerns about the themes that have been identified from the transcribed interview data, please contact me via email at [TomUhle@Dadeschools.net](mailto:TomUhle@Dadeschools.net). If necessary, we can arrange a follow-up interview to clarify any of this information.



## **APPENDIX H: BRACKETING**

I have been teaching students with EBD for 10 years in a secondary school in a large urban public school district. I have spent all 10 years of my teaching career at the same school, in a self-contained program for students with EBD. There are many facets of this program that I believe lead to its success.

- There are two teachers in every classroom to provide academic and behavioral support during all subjects. Teachers are certified in teaching students with EBD, as well as core content subjects.
- Students are monitored during the entire school day, including unstructured times such as breakfast, lunch, hallway transitions, and dismissal.
- There is a comprehensive positive behavioral support system in place in the program. Students can earn points for appropriate behavior and point cards that can be redeemed for tangible reinforcements in a point store. Points are monitored on behavioral graphs and shared with parents on a daily basis.
- Students with EBD use the same core content textbooks and materials as the students in the general education classroom setting.
- Students with EBD have access to technology on a daily basis.
- Students with EBD are included in the general education classroom setting based on IEP team recommendations, as well as teacher and parent recommendations.
- Inclusion in the general education classroom setting is used on a progressive basis; often starting with one or two classes out of the program and expanding when the student has demonstrated success. There is frequent communication between teachers in the general

education setting and teachers in the program for students with EBD to monitor the academic and behavioral progress of students with EBD in the general education setting.

- Teachers in the program for students with EBD attend core content department meetings in order to maintain the same level of instruction taking place in the general education setting.

I believe that it is appropriate to provide a continuum of placements for students with EBD that can include a self-contained setting, inclusion in a general education class with support, and full inclusion in the general education setting. There are behaviors often exhibited by students with EBD that make a more restrictive placement an appropriate one for developing academic and behavioral skills. With that in mind, it is my belief that all students with EBD can learn adaptive skills that will help them function in a general education setting, through intensive work by special educators, parents, and the students themselves. Self-contained settings should be viewed as temporary placements until the student has demonstrated a readiness to perform successfully in the general education classroom.

Teaching students with EBD can be a difficult placement for a teacher. There are personality characteristics that can lead to student success and teacher job satisfaction. In my experience, all of the teachers in the program for students with EBD have personality characteristics that contribute to program strength: firm but flexible demeanor, organized, sense of humor, strong content knowledge, adaptability, empathy for students, desire to succeed, team player.

The school principal should be a leading supporter for programs for students with EBD. The principal should provide access to supplies and materials, as well as support personnel that

can help foster programmatic success. The principal should be available to teachers of students with EBD to assist with the unique issues that may arise in such a placement. The principal should ensure that teachers of students with EBD do not feel isolated from their colleagues, and are regarded as an important part of the school body. As a school leader, a principal should have knowledge of issues related to educational programming for students with EBD, and make efforts to support the teachers despite the challenges associated with the field. The principal should have strong knowledge of school budgeting and be able to manipulate the school budget to maximize funding for programs for students with EBD. The principal should assist teachers of students with EBD, through direct intervention or delegation, with student discipline. When disciplining students with EBD, the principal should be cognizant of the manifestations of the disability, and not administer disciplinary measures that may be unwarranted. The principal should seek alternatives to out-of-school suspension whenever possible, instead finding alternative solutions that can keep a student in school, while still addressing the problem behavior.

## **APPENDIX I: ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS**

## Additional Quotations

### Research Question One

#### Commonality #1

P-1: "...if the teacher decides that the child has to have access to the regular education in the regular setting, than the child has access."

P-1: "We only mainstream when the kid or the child is ready to go. We do do some placements, first in the old LD setting, or the new VE setting, to see if the child is successful there..."

P-1: "...sometimes they even have electives in the regular setting."

P-2: "[for student placement] we really rely on teacher recommendation."

P-2: "...any child, based upon a teacher recommendation, or a parent request, and through the IEP, as long as we're within guidelines of the IEP, we'll move that kid into an inclusion or general education program."

P-3: "...we have a very controlled lunch. Prior to my getting here, we used to have it where the EBD would eat separate. Away from the general ed. students. We don't do that anymore."

P-3: "...our EBD students are included in all of the activities that are going on, as well as our general ed students."

P-4: "...try an inclusion class with them, where we can move them on, and not hold them back."

P-4: "We've got to get them ready for the real-world. Because there's no EBD program in the real world... if we're doing our job, that's where we're going to get them."

P-4: "...one of the things I changed... the ultimate goal is to get the kids mainstreamed, as much as possible."

P-4: "...we try to include them in everything...they're involved with everything. We reward them along with the other kids...if we have field days, they all go out, if we have assemblies, they're a part of the total school."

P-5: "...there's some of them in those classes that we feel can go into a general ed. class without it, without an inclusion teacher in there, then we put them in there."

P-5: "Some of them function very well without the support of the ESE teacher. I have some that have gone beyond that level and they're in regular general ed. classes. And just monitor their grades, and make sure they're doing well, and being able to handle the material."

P-6: "You just have to accommodate them...to bring them into the general population as much as possible. And to let them be successful."

P-6: "Two changes...one has been having the kids be more incorporated in the general population."

## Commonality #2

P-1: "We have also given them tools: technology, books. Tools that sometimes were not given to EBD or SPED teachers, which were who were usually the last ones to get textbooks."

P-1: "EBD students use the same programs that we use for the regular students."

P-1: "Teachers have been trained in the reading strategies and the reading program and all of the core books that we use for regular students are also being employed."

P-3: "They take regular assessments, just as the general ed. kids do."

P-4: "...they've got to meet the same standards, you've got to maintain the rigor, to meet the emotional needs, and to provide the resources that they need, for the children."

P-4: "...keep subjects in their pure form, so that it's not watered down, the curriculum's not watered down."

P-4: "To meet the needs of all the kids in the classroom, and equal access to the same education that all of the other kids are getting."

P-5: "...the program here, they're not very much different from my general ed. population."

P-5: "...many people have come to this school and gone into their classes, and they didn't even know it was an EBD class setting."

### Commonality #3

P-1: "Progress is also documented as far as behavior is concerned. Have they met their behavioral goals? Are there any gains, can those students be "mainstreamed", to use an old word, or included in the regular programs."

P-1: "We monitor them... we look at their progress to see if they are placed correctly, and if we have to pull them back in we do."

P-2: "We articulate with our teachers constantly through reviewing progress."

P-3: "We have utilized all the data for our EBD students as well as we have for our general ed. students."

P-4: "...we use the content data."

P-4: "...the point sheets, the behavior point sheets, for the behavior."



P-4: “we monitor their progress, and academic progress. If we see kids are not cutting it, and, obviously, even with the regular inclusion classes, we monitor all of those kids and monitor their academic success, with compliance with the IEP.”

P-5: “We use that same data to place students who need help in math, or other areas, and we target those areas.”

P-5: “We’re constantly looking at data... look at those students particularly to see how they’re performing as it compares to the other students.”

P-5: “...monitoring that data and looking at the trends on it.”

P-6: “The IEP meeting and the staffing. Using their data, and social skills.”

P-6: “...usually when we are getting ready for an IEP meeting, we gather all that information together and we have a good conversation and we make accommodations based on that.”

#### Commonality #4

P-1: “...points systems need to be employed. And behavior modifications need to be in place.”

P-1: “...behavioral interventions, we use the points, and the points are related to a point store where the children can use the points to buy something that, and pretty things I might add, that may be in that point store.”

P-3: “Our point system is generated off their behavior in those areas, in the hallways, in the classrooms, in the cafeteria. And then, of course, we even take it a step further, because we go to their bus and transportation to and from home.”

P-3: “We have more of a behavior modification point system.”

P-3: “I think the behavior mod works pretty good. I think that, I think the kids are driven by that... our school is 98% free or reduced lunch. Very low socio-economic. So not having a lot, I think the kids are appreciative every Friday when they get that, go to the behavior point store, I think they are appreciative of that.”

P-3: “A lot of times we get donations for the point store.”

P-4: “...point sheets, and rewarding them, with a lot of positive reinforcement that goes on based on their point sheets.”

P-5: “And if you use it with fidelity, it works.”

### **Research Question One: Outliers**

#### **Outlier #1**

P-4: “[Technology] So that’s one of the things I’ve tried to do, distribute evenly within the building. And of course PD, that goes along with it, to make sure teachers are using it appropriately...

P-4: “...one of the things that I did do was ensure that all of my SPED classes had some sort of technology in it... Making sure that they have computers so the kids can go online...”

#### **Outlier #2**

P-4: “We try to be direct and teach kids ‘real-world’; what do you do if you’re feeling this way? A lot of what we do, even as administrators, with these kids if they come to us, we’re counselors. We talk to them. How do you control your behavior? If you feel yourself losing it, what can you do? Strategies. ‘Real-world’ applications. You can’t do this in the real world. You’ve got to be in control of your behavior.”

P-4: “We’ve got to get them ready for the real-world. Because there’s no EBD program in the real world...”

P-4: “Trying to make things real-world.”

P-4: “I believe in ‘real-world.’”

### Outlier #3

P-5: “...our EBD students are very high, so they work very well.”

P-5: “This school has always had a very strong EBD program. The teachers that have been here have always been top notch. And I think that’s probably been the key. They’re well-versed, and they know what works and what doesn’t work with these kids. They always have worked with a point system. They’ve been the ones who’ve really been behind the positive reward system.”

P-5: “...they have some behavioral problems, but as far as being able to learn and contribute and be successful, they can do just as well as any student.”

P-5: “...you can see some of my EBD scores probably outscore a lot of my regular ed. students.”

## **Research Question Two**

### Commonality #1

P-2: “...they have to have a background in special education...it’s always helpful that they have strong content knowledge in order to successfully implement the curriculum... most important, they have to have compassion and patience and flexibility in dealing with children that have this type of a disability. If you are an inflexible, non-trusting, non-

caring person, being in that program is not for you. I will not allow a person of that ilk to be in that program. I'll find another spot for them."

P-2: "...if your personality doesn't meet what we need in that classroom, we're going to find someone else who can do that job."

P-3: "...the person that I have chosen, that they're good models for the students."

P-3: "...ensuring that the instructors that I have for these EBD students are well-prepared to instruct them."

P-3: "They have to be very good disciplinarians. They have to be firm, but they have to be fair as well. And you have to have a good mix."

P-4: "I think it's important to ensure that the students are placed with the appropriate instructors. I think that has a lot to do with their emotional wellbeing."

P-4: "...one of them is National Board Certified, and both of them are integrated curriculum certified, so I've kind of taken a little bit advantage that many of them are multi-certified."

P-4: "...the teacher has to be the perfect match up or it's not going to work for the student, or the teacher. And the program will not be successful."

P-4: "You've gotta have the right people in there. There are people that are certified, but the certification doesn't mean anything if they don't have common sense, understand these kids, understanding the needs of the kids. Because it's different."

P-6: "I think personnel was the biggest. The big, big issue here."

P-6: "[Teachers are] the most critical aspect of the whole thing. You've got to have good teachers that know what they're doing."

P-6: "...bringing in those people that know how to work with them. The personnel."

P-6: "Because you need charismatic, dynamic people to be able to deal with them and their issues."

### Commonality #2

P-2: "...the word "no" does not exist in this office when my teachers need something."

P-2: "...if a teacher brings and shows me something that they are excited about, and they're buying into it, and they feel that it's going to benefit their kids, than I am going to get that for them...[through various forms of funding] we will go after that and we will get that resource for them."

P-3: "And come mid-year...I'll ask them again to give me an order of anything they need as well. And I'll see if we can accommodate you."

P-4: "And all the tools and resources. The same things that everyone else has, ensuring that they have it too."

P-4: "Make sure they have the resources. That would be my role for every teacher. To ensure that they have what they need to do their job to the best of their ability."

P-5: "...provide them with the tools and support to do that."

P-6: "And you've got to provide them with the materials and the support that they need to be able to do their job, and do it right."

### Commonality #3

P-1: "Paperwork is horrible. Just to complete one IEP now a days requires a number of hours that we do not have."

P-1: “It is my belief that all ESE teachers, including all EBD teachers, should receive, contractually, another pay... I do believe that they need to receive payment for the type of work that they do... I believe that the teachers are not compensated as they ought to be compensated.”

P-1: “They can say anything from programmatic things, to behavioral things, to the way the unit is developing or evolving, or the lack of support that they are receiving from some members of the unit, anything.”

P-1: “We go to happy hour (laugh).”

P-2: “I have been in her classroom. I have sat with those kids. She has walked those children into my office to look at my turtles, to have a conversation with me, to present me with artwork, I’ve sat in the classroom, we’ve played a game... I’m just the benefactor of her good work.”

P-2: “...my teachers know that I have an open-door policy, that I’m here to help them do their job. I do not stand in their way. I do not want to stand as a wall to prevent them from doing what they think is in the best interest of the kids. They have a tremendous amount of freedom. I go into their classrooms, I watch what they are doing. But my support, as an administrator, is based upon me trusting them, that they are doing the right thing for our kids, and the data shows that they are.”

P-2: “I think the most effective practice is looking them square in the eye and saying, “look, I know that you’ve got a tough job, and you are basically fighting dragons on a daily basis, and though the kids might not say ‘thank you’, and the parents might not say ‘thank you’, I thank you for your service.”

P-2: “To be honest with you, it’s to hug ‘em. Because I believe that they have the toughest job in the world.”

P-2: “I also say that the most valuable piece of furniture that principals do not have is a couch, so that people can come in and just sit and relax and just blow off steam.”

P-4: “The paperwork frustrates them, all the documentation... I would say the most enjoyable part of the day would be working with the kids, it’s all the other things, all that paperwork that comes along with those things, with these IEPs and things, because they share in that.”

P-4: “My contribution? Just that I get it. Nothing needs to be explained to me because I understand it. Having been there and done that. Having taught EH kids. I kind of get it. I have a sense of what the programmatic needs are.”

P-4: “My role is just to be there, support their efforts.”

P-6: “I wish I could pay them more, or do other things, but I can’t. So I gotta help with a human touch.”

P-6: “...the teachers need to feel that they are valued. That they are important. They are important to the whole function of the school, not just to that one little class. They have to feel involved. They have to feel that their voice is heard and considered. And when they want to try to do something we give them the leeway to do so. I think giving them a sense of autonomy is important.”

P-6: “I think giving the teachers the leeway and a voice...”

P-6: “...they’ve got to feel empowered to make decisions and know that they’re going to be supported when they make those decisions. And they have to, they have to feel

comfortable with asking for things, and they only get that with the contact with them. It's all hands-on."

P-6: "You've gotta be there, you've gotta talk to them, you've gotta support them, you've gotta provide that guidance for them. And, you know, be that shoulder that they cry on when they've had a rough day with their kids. I think, you've gotta put a human face to it, and look at it that way."

P-6: "I go and I talk to them. Having them be approachable to share with you, and talking to you, and more being more of a people thing than an administrator thing. Even when they've had a bad day, "Hey, is everything OK? You going to be OK? You've got a good long weekend coming up." That kind of thing. More of a cheerleader kind of thing. I think that goes a long way. More of an emotional support."

#### Commonality #4

P-1: "I include EBD teachers in professional trainings... If there is a training out there, then we ensure that an EBD teacher goes there as a representative of their department... they need to infuse the regular curriculum into their classroom, and obviously, tailor it to all the needs of the individual children that they have.

P-3: "...we encourage them to register for any type of professional development. We also require them to do mandatory professional development within the subject areas they are teaching."

P-6: "...if you're going to provide a teacher with professional development it has to be something they can actually use. They can come back the next day to class and use. It's got to be meaningful to them, and to what they're doing, and what they're working



with... it needs to be something that is simple to use, and something that has value to it. You know, the teachers have to buy into it. If they can't get that from the PD, it totally a waste.”

#### Commonality #5

P-1: “I think that a sense of belonging to their department and to the school faculty helps them feel that they are heard and that they matter.”

P-2: “We recognize them at faculty meetings. We provide them with as many goodies as we can throughout the year, and we care about them.”

P-4: “They meet on a regular basis as a department, within their respective departments...”

P-4: “...making them feel a part of the whole school, getting support from their colleagues, and sharing ideas and materials.”

#### **Research Question Two: Outliers**

##### Outlier #1

P-1: “I think that the strength lies in the people who are in the program and the way that it is carried out. The teachers at [this school] are consistent, they are very good, and some are excellent teachers.”

##### Outlier #3

P-4: “Ensuring that they are familiar with what the program is, the needs of the kids, what resources might be available to them to provide that additional support, who they are, the resource people, and knowing that they can turn to them, access to these individuals.”

P-4: “Having the resource people there when they need them to support their efforts.”

#### Outlier #4

P-5: “Putting substitutes in to provide relief time for them to be able to do some of these things.”

#### Outlier #5

P-5: “But all occupations have stress, and no matter what level you are teaching at, or what type of job you are doing, they all have stress. But I don’t feel that they are stressed out any more so than the general ed. population.”

### Research Question Three

#### Commonality #1

P-1: “...the ratios...have changed, and that impacts the quality of education and the close supervision that you need in an EBD unit.”

P-1: “I believe that the program needs to be followed the way it was *meant* to be followed, with the correct ratio, the number of teachers that are certified in the classroom...”

P-1: “...my biggest contribution, the way I see it, has been to preserve the original programs as they were meant to be preserved.”

P-3: “...you have to be creative with the scheduling.”

P-3: “I’m not going to do anything to circumvent the system or, you just have to be creative in what you do.”

P-5: “...as far as the allotted budget, it’s tight.”

P-5: “...you have to be creative and think outside of the box.”

P-6: "...the mandates, and the policies, and those things, we have to work with them. And sometimes you have to find the gray area...and you have to work with that. Field trips and things that take money. We do a lot of that."

P-6: "And if I don't have the funding through the special ed., I'll use the general ed. funds for that."

#### Commonality #2

P-1: "My role is to make sure that not every EBD child is suspended for EBD behaviors. EBD behaviors need to be addressed by, a, the EBD teachers, by the behavior management teacher, by CSI, if we had CSI at any point, and definitely by the home."

P-1: "...we can send them to the behavior management teacher, which is why she is there, which is an alternative to suspension. Definitely send them to counseling."

P-1: "...really we are not suspending as many EBD students for behaviors that ought to be addressed in the EBD classroom, or with the behavior management teacher, or with a counselor. So we have gotten very savvy in addressing these behaviors and right now, again, there is only one out of compliance who we have had to meet with the parents three times for manifestation."

P-2: "...we utilize outdoor suspension as the last resort. We take into consideration the exceptionalities of kids. We also work very closely with the kid and their family, to let them know that we are not going to allow the exceptionality to get in the way of us providing a safe and effective learning environment."

P-2: "...as long as the student is willing to understand that as the misbehaviors continue, that the punishment will also escalate. But I don't want the kid to ever feel that if they make one mistake than they're totally out of the game."

P-3: "We use progressive discipline with them."

P-3: "We've had very few referrals involving our EBD students. I compared the historical suspension data to the data that we currently have now, and the EBD suspensions have gone down tremendously."

P-4: "...in lieu of outdoor, have them go to this alternative program where there's counseling involved with students and parents in the evening."

P-4: "We try to avoid outdoor suspensions, and CSI, by utilizing various resource people too. It's having a time out, sometimes that's all the student needs, is having a time out, just a cool-down period."

P-4: "If we see that a child is really getting into trouble in the hallways or something, we'll put them on a temporary basis where a para will escort them from class to class until they settle down and realize...supervision in the hallways if we need to tighten things up... if we see that a child is getting to the most trouble during the change of class, well, I'm not going to put them in CSI for that. We'll monitor them...It's a disciplinary action that isn't punitive."

P-4: "I don't believe that a child, just because of their behavior, and their behavior gets in the way of their academics, that you retain them for two or three years. I'm saying if we are doing our job, than we shouldn't even reach that point."

P-5: “They use a lot of techniques, time out, point systems, they have point stores. A lot of them just need a cooling off period.”

P-5: “Most students in the EBD program probably have a lower percentage rate of suspensions out of school, suspensions in school than my gen. ed. program.”

P-6: “...once they calm down, and I do this often, I’ll have a kid following me the whole day. For the rest of the day. I know he’s not going to do well in CSI, and I can’t send him back to class, but I’ll have him here... And I have them do something totally off topic, doesn’t have anything to do with the class. And after a half-hour, forty-five minutes, they’ve calmed down enough where, “Ok, let’s talk about what happened”. And that seems to work.”

### **Research Question Three: Outliers**

#### **Outlier #1**

P-6: “...we do have some that are habitual, are suspended on a regular basis...when they accumulate a certain number of days we have to have the manifestation, and the meetings...”

P-6: “Usually the regular ed teachers are the ones that at first have an issue... the student has an issue, and they don’t know how to deal with it. And they, they think we’re going to take the student, and they want the kid suspended for ten days, and, ‘this student can’t be in my class anymore’.”

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