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Key Factors Contributing to EBD Teacher Attrition: Solutions to Increase Career Longevity

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Key Factors Contributing to EBD Teacher Attrition:

Solutions to increase Career Longevity

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Abstract

In the United States, annually, 10% of EBD teachers burn out and leave the profession, subsequently forcing districts to hire underprepared teachers. When compared to other education professionals, EBD teachers are leading in educators where demand exceeds supply. It is projected there will be a 17% increase in demand for EBD teachers by 2018. The purpose of this literature review is to explore key factors contributing to EBD teacher attrition and to offer potential solutions to increase career longevity. Role overload, poor school climate, and deficient teacher preparation are three contributing factors, one not mutually exclusive to the other. Solutions for career retention include improved teacher preparation programs, mentoring, and enhanced administration support.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The attrition rate of special education teachers has been a concern for several decades (Zhang, Wang, Losinski, & Katsiyannis, 2014). The erosion of special educators ultimately leads to a shortage of qualified teachers throughout the nation. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) reported that in 2011-2012 there were a total of 44 states that had a shortage of special education teachers (2015). In 2001 it was reported the national average attrition rate in the field of special education was 14% per year, (Kindzierski, O'Dell, Marable, & Raimondi, 2013). The highest concentration being among novice teachers. According to the *Digest of Education Statistics* (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) 14.5% of special educators left teaching in the year of 2012-13. Although the statistics indicate that the attrition rate among special educators had not significantly increased in the span of 10 years, it does deliver evidence the rate is not improving.

While the burnout rate of special educators is troubling, the attrition rate of teachers providing education for students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD) is particularly problematic. In 1999-2000 the U.S. Department of Education reported that during that school year, one fourth of the positions for EBD teachers were left unfilled. Essentially, the problem is continuing to grow. Nationally, the EBD teacher's attrition movement is projected to be approximately 10% annually (Hill, 2011). It was predicted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Department of Labor in 2009 that there will be a 17% increase in demand for EBD teachers by 2018. This prediction is not based

on a potential increase in the population of students with EBD, but because of the turnover rate of teachers serving students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

More recently, The American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE) reported that the obstacles finding and keeping qualified EBD teachers are not decreasing. The AAEE's *2014-2015 Educator Supply and Demand Report* (2015), showed that when compared with any other educational profession, EBD teachers are foremost in teachers where demand exceeds the supply. Of the 144 school districts that participated in the survey, all reported a considerable shortage of EBD teachers. According to the survey, two other hard-to-staff, special education positions are teachers of students with severe/profound intellectual disability (three standard deviations below the norm)and the developmentally cognitively disabled (two standard deviations below the norm). Schools reported they expected to lose a standard average of 123 teachers in 2016, with EBD instructors leading in departure. In addition, 55.8% of school districts reported that not having enough candidates to apply for the jobs was a big challenge, and 53.3% indicated that candidates not having the right credentials was also a considerable challenge. As a result, school districts are pressed to hire unqualified teachers in these high demand, hard-to-staff positions in order to fill the vacancies (AAEE, 2015).

Multiple and complex problems challenge the field of special education. Because of the significant shortage of special education teachers, more specifically EBD teachers, many school districts spend considerable amounts of money due to teacher turnover. Districts are having to recruit, mentor and train teachers who are, most often, not certified for the job. The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements (2013) reported that 50% of novice EBD teachers will exit the industry within the first five years of employment. Many researchers (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook,

Whitener, & Weber, 1997; Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2013; Hill, 2011) studied the patterns of retention and attrition among the EBD teaching professionals. When investigating the high rate of attrition in the EBD teaching world, several commonalities continued to surface; role overload, poor school climate, deficient teacher preparation and the incompatible pairing of teacher personality and the responsibilities of the job.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the prominent reasons why EBD teachers have a higher turnover rate than other special education teachers. This paper provides a glance back at the history of special education and attempts to answer questions pertaining to the attrition and retention of special education, particularly EBD teachers. Looking at the past and present of EBD teacher turnover, provides insight on trends and patterns over the years. Reviewing research provides strategies and supports that may help prevent future burnout and increase the career longevity of teachers of students with emotional and behavioral challenges.

Significance of the Problem

Since the mid to late 1970s special education has encountered a shortage in fully certified special education teachers (American Association for Employment in Education, 2015; Boe & Cook, 2006; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015; Prather-Jones, 2011). The problem is more significant among teachers who are fully licensed and adequately prepared to teach students with EBD (U.S Department of Education, 2012). EBD teachers are burning out and leaving the profession. Novice teachers are exiting the job before tenure status (1-3years), leaving the profession with an insufficient number of qualified teachers.

Among school age children, the registered average number of students with EBD, requiring special education services, nationwide, is between 6% and 10% (Kauffman, Mock & Simpson, 2007). Kindzierski et al., (2013) noted that an alarming 14% of special educators left the field in 2001. Hill (2011), reported that 10% of teachers who exit the teaching profession are teachers of students with emotional and behavioral challenges. Hard-to-staff schools, primarily serving low income and minority students, experience the most extreme teacher turnover rate at 45% (Goldrick, 2016). By 2018, the need for special educators is anticipated to rise to 17% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2012-2013).

A recent study revealed that while more than 800 special education teachers resigned in Minnesota in 2012, only 417 new special educator licenses were issued (Meitrodt, 2013). More specifically, in the state of Minnesota, 44% of school districts report staffing in EBD as the most difficult teaching position to fill, double the 2012 report (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). In the 2015 *Supply and Demand Report*, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) reported that districts had to hire 3,504 teachers who did not have the essential certification for the subjects and the grade level taught. This equals six percent of the entire teaching workforce. Special permissions and district hiring data show 11 shortage areas, with EBD being the highest, granting 294 permissions.

Noticeably, the number of qualified EBD teachers is not proportionate to the rising number of EBD students. However, because the supply of teachers is minimal and continues to diminish, schools and administrators are forced to hire ill-equipped and unlicensed teachers to educate one of the most difficult populations of students. This continues the trend of burnout and attrition. Not only are school districts suffering the

repercussions of unqualified personnel, the students are being deprived of the quality education they deserve. Kindzierski et al. (2013), reported that, nationally, in the field of practicing EBD teachers, only 48% are certified to do so. Nationwide, school districts are bearing the burden of financial and academic liability due to costs of recruiting and training inexperienced, uncertified teachers. According to the 2007-08 SASS and its supplement 2008-2009 TFS results indicate that approximately $2.2 billlon is spent annually in response to turnover setback. Furthermore, because EBD teachers, especially the novice, will leave the job within one to three years, the cycle continues (Haynes, Maddock, & Goldrick, 2014).

Richard Ingersoll, is a professor of education and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. He dedicated a portion of his time and expertise to research and analyze teacher attrition and the contributing factors for teacher turnover. In a 2001 report for the *American Educational Research Association,* Ingersoll (2001) used the following metaphor to illustrate the teaching profession:

> Rather than insufficient supply, the data indicate that school staffing problems are primarily due to excess demand, resulting from a "revolving door"-where large numbers of teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement. Thus, the data suggest that the solution to staffing problems does not primarily lie in increasing supply, but rather in decreasing demand. In plain terms, teacher recruitment programs alone will not solve the staffing problems of schools if they do not also address the organizational sources of low retention. (2001, p. 501)

More recently, the founder and CEO of The New Teacher Center (NTC), Ellen Moir, used a similar comparison, to describe the failed attempts at resolving the national teaching shortage:

> Imagine a bucket. Your job is to keep that bucket full to the brim of water. Sounds easy. Except, every few minutes, someone walks by and jostles that bucket and some of the water sloshes out. You fill up the bucket again. After repeated bumps into the bucket, the bucket develops a few steady leaks. Between the leakage and the jostling, you have to replace a good portion of the water every few minutes. One more thing - your water sources are limited, disparate and unpredictable. What would you do? Keep running around to get more water or fix the leaks and take better care of the bucket? (2014, ¶ 1)

Although the "leaky bucket" (Moirs, 2014) and "revolving door" (Ingersoll, 2001) metaphors do not refer exclusively to EBD teachers, they do represent the special education profession in which EBD teachers are a segment. Teachers of students with behavior challenges experience the largest percentage of burnout compared to other special education teachers. The nation's attempt to combat the problem has been unsuccessful, diverting large sums of money. States have made an effort to recruit new, uncertified, community expert teachers in an attempt to educate the most complex population of students. Yet, as research shows, the novice, inexperienced teachers are the most likely to exit (Billingsley, Fall, & Williams, 2006).

 Research Questions

This thesis seeks to answer two questions.

1. What are the primary factors contributing to EBD teacher attrition?

2. What can be done to increase the career longevity of EBD teachers

Definitions of Terms

- Attrition: Attrition relates to a special education teacher's decision to vacate his or her teaching position: transfer to teaching position other than special education, exiting the profession entirely (Billingsley, 2004, p. 40).

- Burnout: Burnout is a condition caused by lack of ability to manage stressful occupational conditions accompanied by low morale, low productivity, high absenteeism and high job turnover (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006).

- Educational Assistant (EA): Individuals employed to help classroom teachers with various responsibilities (White House, 2016).

- Emotional Behavioral Disorder: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) describes emotional behavioral disorders as: "a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance"

  1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors

  2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers

  3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances

  4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression

  5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (IDEA, Regulations: Part 300 / A / 300.8, 2004)

- Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): As described in Minnesota statutes, section Minn. R. 3525.0210, subp. 22, an FBA is a process to gather information to assist individualized education program (IEP) teams in developing appropriate individualized positive behavioral interventions and supports. An FBA's purpose is to determine when and why a student exhibits problem behaviors, what reinforces the problem behavior, and what types of positive behavioral supports and interventions would reduce the negative behaviors and increase the desired behaviors (Minnesota Department of Education, 2012).

- Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with 34 CFR 300.320 through 300.324 (IDEA, 2004).

- Non-Licensed Community Expert: Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.25. A special permission granted to a school district to hire an individual who is not a licensed teacher, but has a specific area of expertise that is related to the teaching assignment (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015).

- Positive Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): As defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.0941(d), "positive behavioral interventions and supports" means interventions and strategies to improve the school environment and teach children appropriate behaviors and skills; response to crisis (Minnesota Department of Education, 2012)

- Retention: Retention is defined as a teacher who remains in the same teaching position as the prior year. However, much like the concept of attrition, retention is best conceptualized as existing on a continuum. Retention can refer to a teacher who remains in the same position, in the same educational facility, or in a special

education position in a different school or educational facility (Billingsley, 2004, p. 40).

- Variance: Minnesota Rule 8710.1400. A special permission granted for fully licensed teachers to serve in positions (i.e., out-of-field) for which they are not licensed (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015).

Summary

Nationwide, schools face serious shortages in the field of special education, particularly in the professional sector of EBD teachers (AAEE, 2015; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012-2013; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016-2017; Iris Center for Training Enhancements, 2013; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In 2017, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that in the 2014-2015 school year, approximately 5% of students ages 3-21 receive special education services for EBD (NCES, 2017). According to the 2015 Minnesota Education Department's Supply and Demand Report, 44% of districts indicate that it is difficult or impossible to hire qualified EBD teachers. Nationally, 10% of teachers who exit the profession are teachers of students with EBD (AAEE, 2015; Hill, 2011). In 2017, *The National Center for Educational Statistics* (NCES) reported that approximately 5% of youth between the ages of 3 and 21 are receiving services for EBD.

The consequences of the EBD teacher shortage result in the hiring of unqualified and unprepared teachers (Kindzierski et al., 2013). Recruiting, training and retaining licensed teachers effects not only budgets but school climate as a whole. Teachers hired on a provisional license are asked to commit themselves to a difficult population of children, complete obligatory paperwork and manage a classroom without the

proper training. Novice EBD teachers are destined to fail the moment they accept the job; subsequently, causing the cycle to continue.

Role overload, poor school atmosphere, and inadequate teacher preparation have been proposed as influences contributing to the attrition and burnout of EBD teachers. Many of the research findings imply that workplace conditions (i.e. administration support, peer collaboration, mentoring) are the leading motivators for either teacher retention or attrition (Billingsley et al., 2006; Cancio, 2014; Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2013). Researching the leading sources or combination of factors that cause the high rate of attrition for EBD teachers provides a detailed look at cause and effect and provides potential action plans to increase retention in this high demand profession.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE) and the U.S. Department of Education studies tracked teacher shortages in every region of the country. They consistently found that the demand for EBD teachers exceeds the supply (AAEE 2000, 2004, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Over the years, studies have been conducted attempting to find why EBD teacher attrition levels are elevated in comparison to other teachers. Substantial searching, and failed attempts to contact professional organizations such as The Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE), The Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE), The U.S. Department of Education, and The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) were made to obtain recent data regarding teacher turnover in special education versus general education.

Although recent valuable data on the subject was not found, earlier studies discovered that special educators generally leave the profession at twice the rate of general educators (Billingsley 2004; Boe & Cook 2006; COPSSE 2004, Prather-Jones, 2011). Dissecting the prevalence of the problem further exposes that 10% of special education teacher turnover are those teaching students with EBD. The absence of certified EBD teachers is not improving; in fact, in some states it is predicted to worsen (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). The literature proposes several contributing factors to the problem. Some researchers claim solutions can be developed. Because the shortage has not improved, the answers are not simple.

Quantitative and qualitative scholarly literature was extensively reviewed regarding teachers who work with students receiving special education services, particularly those who work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. State and federal government reports were examined for comparisons of past and present data on teacher supply and demand, mobility and attrition. The purpose of this thesis has two focal points. The first is to analyze why EBD teachers are leaving the field of education at a rate of 10% per year. The turnover rate of EBD trumps all other educational sectors, leaving districts with a continuous cycle of complications. The second topic of concentration is to explore potential solutions and supports that can be implemented to prevent burnout and increase the career longevity of EBD teachers.

Initially, the beginning process of the research was overwhelming due to an excess of information. Originally, search terms were used such as, "EBD teacher attrition," "burnout," and "EBD teacher retention." Unfortunately, although valuable, much of the material was dated. As a result, instead of focusing on "attrition" and "burnout" emphasis shifted to using the most recent references cited in the literature, which eventually lead to contemporary, empirical, peer reviewed literature and reports. Databases used in finding useful research were Jstor, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Taylor and Francis and Sage Journals. Bethel University Interlibrary Loan (ILL) provided access to many resources unobtainable by the general public. Google Scholar generated the most useful information by providing the option to customize the range of dates and selecting peer reviewed articles.

This chapter begins by exploring the history of special education in the U.S. The remainder of the chapter examines some researchers' proposed causes for the pervasive attrition problem focusing exclusively on role overload, poor school climate, and deficient teacher preparation. The final part of the chapter focuses on over-all suggested solutions and adjustments that districts might implement to aid in retaining their special education teachers.

History of Special Education and Teacher Attrition

Throughout history many labels have been used to label maladaptive or deviant behavior. In ancient times, oppositional behavior was thought to be the result of demonic possession of the body. This concept existed until the Greek physician Hippocrates (460-377 B.C) challenged the notion that defiant behavior was caused by evil spirits. Hippocrates considered abnormal behavior to be the result of physical illness, mainly characterized as hereditary or the result of brain damage. Although Hippocrates may have provided a premature scientific foundation to brain pathology, the notion that emotional disturbance was evil by nature held steady until the 17th century (Ollendick & Herson, 1983).

The foundation for modern special education in the west, was not established until the 20th century. Although, special education was available in some 19th-century institutions, it was not until the early 1900s that a national organization of special education teachers was formed in America, Council for Exceptional Children (Kauffman & Landrum, 2006). Many individuals and events in history (e.g. doctors, advocacy groups, government mandates and research) contributed to contemporary special education practices.

During the first decade of the 20th century the attitude toward individuals exhibiting antisocial behavior began changing. In the past, those demonstrating socially deviant behavior were often treated poorly and regularly institutionalized. However, at the turn of the century, concern for the mental and physical health of children began to grow (Ollendick & Hersen, 1983). As the paradigm for the emotionally disturbed gradually changed, many movements evolved advocating for special education.

In 1909, psychologists William James and Clifford W. Beers began one of the first movements bringing awareness to the public regarding the emotional wellbeing of mentally impaired children and adults. The National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH) was established by Beers, following his personal and traumatic experience in a mental institution. The NCMH was tailored towards safeguarding the education and learning environment for children with disabilities. The organization sought to ensure that children with disabilities were receiving comparable treatment and education to that of their nondisabled peers. Hence, the philosophies of the mental hygiene period aided in the early design of and future practices in special education (Billingsley et al., 2006).

Another of the earliest forms of support for families and educators of children with exceptional needs was the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) established in 1922. During its early years, the CEC consisted primarily of parents advocating for improved provisions, education and treatment of children with special needs. Later, in 1964, the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) was established. This division of the CEC is, and continues to be, dedicated to meeting the unique needs of students with behavioral disorders. The encouragement of quality education,

endorsement of research, and support of EB/D students and their families are the

primary goals of the CCBD (Bullock & Gable, 1999). Today, the CEC is the chief

global alliance of devoted professionals and parents warranting the educational

success for children with exceptional and unique learning capabilities. The

organization advocates for suitable government policies, sets professional standards,

ethics and guidelines. The CEC also offers professional development and resources to

promote valuable specialized performance for educators and support services (Council

for Exceptional Children, 2008).

Parent advocacy groups such as the CEC and the CCBD were steps toward

public awareness and reinforcement for mentally impaired and behaviorally

challenged individuals. However, prior to federal legislation requiring public

education for children with cognitive or emotional disabilities, parents had minimal

options for instruction and often had to home school or pay for expensive private

education (Kauffman & Landrum, 2006; Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Gibb, Rausch,

Cuadrado, & Chung, (2008). However, in 1975 a federal law would alter and enhance

the education of children needing specialized education: The Education for All

Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142, 1975), which would later become known as

the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Education for All

Handicapped Act (EHA) instituted a right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education

(FAPE) regardless of disability, and protected the rights of students and parents. The

mandate also stated that all children meeting the criteria shall receive special

education services and supports. Children eligible for special education services, are

required to be medically diagnosed with a disability and exhibit evidence that the

disability is the cause of their poor educational performance (IDEA, 2004). One of the

supports required by law was the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is due process ensuring educational supports are provided, are appropriate, and meet the needs of the disabled learner.

In 1990, P.L. 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed. This amendment affirms that all children be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Children identified with EBD benefit from the LRE requirement because it specifies conditions for removing them from public schools for corrective action without denying them access to alternate opportunities. The plan's motive is for students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled peers to the greatest degree appropriate. In addition, the Act requires the child study team to administer a Functional Behavior Plan (FBA) and a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), both which encourage positive behavior supports (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010).

In 2001, The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), P.L.107-110, was enacted. The Act encouraged individual states to develop standards and assessments in basic skills, administering the tests at specific grade levels in order to receive federal funding. In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (reauthorization PL 108-446) stated that it was obligatory all students with disabilities partake in yearly state or district testing or recorded substitute assessments. The NCLB act also required teachers to be "highly qualified" in the areas they were teaching (Kauffman & Landrum, 2006).

The 2004 IDEA amendment and the NCLB Act (2002) mandated that special educators meet increased requirements to teach (The NCLB Act was replaced by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in 2015, which is discussed in the *Solutions* part

of the chapter). The NCLB Act was created to improve the education of all children, while IDEA focused on the individual child with emphasis on specialized services for those with disabilities. Although designed with children's best intentions in mind, the laws essentially magnified the already existing special education teacher shortage. The statutes require teachers to obtain full state certification in each "common core" subject area being taught. Yet, states have essentially been forced to bypass the rule and hire unqualified personnel, thus adding to the absence of licensed teachers (Billingsley et al., 2006). According to the 2015 MDE and 2014-2015 AAEE Supply and Demand Reports, the largest percentage of variances and community expert special permissions were granted to fill the vacancies in classrooms serving students with emotional disturbances.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) of the Institute of Education Sciences, within the U.S. Department of Education, conducted seven Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS) of the Nation's public and private K-12 school teachers over the course of 25 years (1998-2013). The Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) reports the findings of the SASS, specifically recounting the previous year's data collection results. The NCES categorizes teachers in three groups: "stayers", "movers", and "leavers". The "stayers" are classified as teachers still teaching in the same school, the "movers" are teachers who moved to a different school, and the "leavers" are teachers that left the profession entirely (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014).

According to the results from the 2012-13 TFS, *Teacher Attrition and Mobility* report (Goldring et al., 2014), 84% of teachers remained at the same school ("stayers"), 8% moved to a different school ("movers"), and 8% left the teaching profession

("leavers"). Approximately 7% of novice (i.e. teachers with less than 3 years of experience) left teaching, and 13 % changed teaching positions. Billingsley (2004), noted that attrition is the combination of those who move from special education to general education ("movers") and those who entirely leave the profession. According to the latest TFS, the attrition rate for teachers, as a whole, is 16% per year. While the TFS (2012-13) does not specifically indicate the percentage of "leavers" in the field of EBD, it is estimated that, in one year, between 9% and 10% of EBD teachers had either shifted their career focus to general education or completely left the EBD career path entirely (Hill, 2011). When examining the history of special education and the laws that have, and continue to, shape the profession today, a question arises as to why and what is causing high special education teacher attrition?

Key Factors Influencing EBD teacher Attrition

Role Overload

According to Minnesota Department of Education's 2015 *Supply and Demand Report*, during 2013-2014 districts had to hire 3,504 teachers who lacked the necessary licenses for the subjects and grade levels taught. Out of those teachers, EBD ranked the highest with 294 special permissions. Learning disabilities was second, holding 265 permissions and developmental delay, coming in third with 145 permissions (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). Although the report does not confirm, specifically, the primary reasons why EBD teaching positions have the highest percentage of variances, it does illustrate, on a state level, that teachers of students with emotional or behavioral disorders are the hardest-to-staff teaching sector

compared to all other educators. Many scholars and government agencies have searched for explanations and trends causing the national EBD teacher shortage.

The most recent research highlights many of the same contributing factors (e.g. role overload, poor school climate, and deficient EBD teacher preparation), one not necessarily mutually exclusive to the other (AAEE, 2000, 2004, 2015; Bettini, E., Kimerling, J., Park, Y., & Murphy, K. M., 2015; Billingsley et al., 2006, Boe & Cook 2006; Cancio et al., 2013; Hill, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2015; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015; Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). The following paragraphs will address state and national analysis of the literature pertaining to EBD teacher role overload.

Attrition can be considered the combination of movers and stayers (Billingsley, 2004); indicating a total of 16% of participants either changed positions or left the field. The survey (2012-2013) also revealed that among public school teachers with 1-3 years of experience, 13% changed positions and 7% left the profession; implying 20% of novice teachers are exiting the field. About 51% of teachers who left the teaching profession in 2012-2013 indicated that the manageability of the workload was better in their current job, outside of education, compared with teaching. Approximately 61% of leavers said that the ability to balance personal life and work was easier in their current working positions than it was in the teaching profession. There has been a significant increase in leavers over the past 25 years. According to the survey, in 1988 there were 132, 300 (5.5%) teachers who left; in 2013 there were 259,400 (7.8%) teachers who departed. Although the report does not exclusively examine the EBD sector of teaching, it does provide affirmation that teachers, in general, are feeling the effects of the heavy workload and balancing those responsibilities with their personal life.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (2016-2017), provides clues as to why EBD teachers leave their careers at a higher rate than other special educators. The Handbook provides an extensive list of the mandatory duties an EBD teacher encounters and specifically expresses, "Helping students with emotional or behavioral disabilities can be highly rewarding. It also can be quite stressful—emotionally demanding and physically draining" (p. 3). Heavy workloads combined with federal and state mandates, minimal to no preparation time, meetings, and extraordinary demands of the student, positioned these teachers, particularly novice teachers, to fail. The physical and emotional demands trigger extreme stress leading to burnout. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2016-2017; Cancio, 2013; IRIS, 2013; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015).

The state of Minnesota's Office of the Revisor of Statutes (2014) provides an electronically published catalogue of Minnesota Administrative Rules mandated by legislation for teachers of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. The first three subparts describe the scope of practice, license requirements, and program requirements. Under program requirements, 36 mandatory prerequisites (e.g. foundational knowledge, referral, evaluation, planning, and programming, instructional design, teaching, and ongoing evaluation, collaboration and communication, clinical experiences, and re-licensure) are outlined.

A teacher candidate must fulfill all of these in order to pursue EBD licensure. Under subpart 2, item D, a subject matter standard is required and a rubric of evidence and mastery of attainment must be completed (Revisor of Statutes, 2014). As it appears on paper, the summary of job responsibilities required by an EBD teacher does not seem to be more burdensome than other teaching areas. However, the argument by some

(Bettini et al., 2015; Billinglsey, 2006; Cancio, 2014; Hill, 2011), is EBD teachers are not given the time and support to fulfill all of the demands with confined time limitations. Teachers of emotionally challenged students often complain they are spending the majority of time either managing behaviors or completing paperwork, instead of teaching (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010).

In Hennepin County, Minnesota, the North Education Center (NEC) is a federal Setting IV (separate day school), providing services to students from urban, suburban and rural communities. The school houses specialized programs for students with extremely challenging behaviors, unique needs and varying disabilities. One of the programs accommodates students with a primary educational diagnosis of EBD. A team of novice and veteran elementary EBD teachers within the program, who wish to remain anonymous, collectively felt burned out and frustrated with the demands of the job. The pressure of relentless duties was causing physical illness, mental exhaustion, and increased absences.

The team repeatedly requested support from administration, but felt ignored, only adding to the frustration. The veteran teachers voiced concern that their responsibilities had increased over the last three years, but they were not given the support or time to cope with the workload. Many of the teachers were seriously considering leaving the district. With support from the district union, the group jointly composed a grievance letter conveying their concerns. The name of the school and identities of the teachers have not been included for the purpose of confidentiality. The following letter to the school administration provides personal perspective of how role overload influences teachers on a daily basis.

Our responsibilities as EBD teachers consist of much more than the average teaching job. In addition to the basic obligations of general education teachers, we have due process duties (e.g., IEPs, 3 year evaluations, meeting notices, contacting all team members, setting up meetings, prior written notices (PWNs), and progress reports). Also, we have multiple district required assessments to administer (e.g. Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Early Reading Screening Inventory (ERSI), and mandated standardized tests). As we all know, the population of students at the school have unique needs and can exhibit intense behaviors. Students are entering our programs with seemingly more intense mental health and behavior challenges. As a result, staffs' attention, intervention techniques, teaching strategies, behavior management and differentiated instruction take energy, planning and time; time that most of the staff are willing to-and want to-contribute and commit to. However, many staff end up working through their lunch breaks because of low staff coverage and safety concerns.

Additional requirements, state or district mandated, that have also been placed on teachers are responsibilities such as: Professional Learning Committees (PLCs), Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), Functional Behavior Assessments (BIPs), learning intentions, lesson plans, restrictive procedures, incident reports, affect charts (daily documentation of student behaviors based on individualized levels of escalation), team de-briefings and staff meetings.

All of these responsibilities leave little time to actually prepare lessons to

be taught. We have only partial units of curriculum for teaching required

subjects; forcing teachers to find their own, and often times paying for

their own materials. The expectations are not proportionate, nor realistic,

for the prep time, money, and support we are given. Many staff are forced

to complete much of their due process outside of contract hours leaving

little prep time for direct instruction and lesson planning. Staff are

becoming weary with the heavy workload ~ we need support.

Written in collaboration with 16 current EBD teachers (2014) in

Minnesota who wish to remain anonymous.

A recent study was conducted by a team of scholars (Bettini et al., 2015) to

investigate the potential relationship between EBD teachers' workloads and their

instructional time. The sample size consisted of eight participants employed in self-

contained classroom environments, serving students with EBD (p. 122). The participants

consisted of three elementary, two middle school, and three high school teachers. The

settings the instructors worked in ranged from a small, diverse, urban district in the

Northeast to a high-performing, inclusive district in the Southwest. Although the study

included merely eight participants, the results are worth considering, collectively, with

larger, quantitative studies (e.g. AAEE, 2000, 2004, 2015; Bureau of Labor Statistics,

U.S. Department of Labor 2016-2017; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015;

National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Office of

Postsecondary Education, 2015). The results of the study revealed that the amount of

time spent on direct instruction varied among the eight teachers. When interviewed, all

teachers reported having between six and 20 responsibilities other than the duties directly

related to teaching. The extra tasks ranged from preparing students' breakfasts daily; supervising after school events; supervising in school suspension; coordinating bus schedules; providing training for new staff and paraprofessionals; and driving students to jobs. In addition to these extra tasks teachers on average spend only 32.36% of their time on instruction. The other portion of time is divided between planning and preparing; consultation and collaboration; paper work; supervision; behavior management and discipline; and miscellaneous duties.

An experienced female teacher who taught for over 11 years in a federal Setting IV (separate day school), serving students with EBD, expresses her frustration with the surplus of teaching and non-teaching duties. She recently made the decision to take a job in another district due to work overload and mental exhaustion with minimal to no leadership support. During her career, within the Setting IV, the student population consisted of students from 13 surrounding metropolitan school districts, with varying ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. The providing school district will remain anonymous for confidentiality reasons.

> The workload of my teaching responsibilities is too much. There
> are not enough hours in the day to prepare lessons, write IEPs, conduct
> Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and write the corresponding
> Behavior Support Plans (BIPs). Because of the frequent physical
> aggression of the students I am required to write Incident Reports and state
> mandated Restrictive Procedure Reports. I am not given enough non-
> student contact time to accomplish all of these responsibilities. District
> and program meetings often absorb all the morning prep time. I end up

taking most of my work home to complete during non-contract, unpaid

time (Chelsea Gates, veteran EBD teacher, 2016).

Teaching students with intense behavior problems is a challenge for teachers,

because they have to attempt to repair academic deficits, while implementing effective

behavior management interventions. These demands, combined with other teaching

requirements, involve considerable expertise in pedagogy, numerous subject areas,

academic modifications, effective time management, organization, classroom

management, functional behavior assessments and interventions (Conroy, Alter, Boyd &

Bettini, 2014).

Poor School Climate

The National School Climate Council (2007) recommends that a positive and

sustained school climate be sustained in the following ways:

School climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and

reflect norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning

practices, and organizational structures. A sustainable, positive school climate,

fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive,

and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values

and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically

safe. People are engaged and respected. Students, families, and educators work

together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators

model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits of, and satisfaction

from, learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school as well as

the care of the physical environment. (p. 4)

Personnel shortages in special education are identified. Critical needs to fill current teaching positions exist. Annually, approximately 13.2% of special educators leave their profession. Out of those special educators, 10% are EBD teachers. Using a combination of Public School Teacher Questionnaires (PSTQ) a component of SASS, surveys and interviews, scholars have discovered various reasons for the shortage and high attrition rate of special education teachers as a whole; indicating poor school climate as one leading factor impeding job satisfaction and eventually leading to burnout (Billingsley et al., 2006; Boe & Cook, 2006; Cancio, 2014; Fall & Billingsley, 2007; IRIS, 2013; MDE, 2015).

The National School Climate Center (2007), listed five dimensions of school climate:

(a) Safety (e.g. rules and norms, physical safety, social/ emotional safety), (b) relationships (e.g. respect for diversity, school connectedness, social support, leadership), (c) teaching and learning (e.g. social, emotional, ethical and civic learning; support for professional relationships), (d) institutional environment (e.g. physical surrounding, resources, supplies) and (e) school improvement process. (p 358)

One recurring indicator, in past and present literature, directly connected to teacher satisfaction or dissatisfaction and overall school climate, is administrative support. Administration can cultivate a positive school atmosphere by supplying resources (e.g. curriculum, professional development, mentoring,) encouraging constructive relationships among colleagues and students, providing clear expectations for all and creating a sense of community (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Albrecht, Johns,

Mounsteven,, & Olufunmilola, 2009; Billingsley, 2004; Cancio et al., 2013; Cancio,
2014). Schools with an absence of strong support models, structures and relationships
often experience a decrease in student and staff engagement; personal competence and
success; and teaching and learning. When school personnel begin to experience
emotional exhaustion as a result of a broken system, the outcomes have direct
consequences for students (Prather-Jones, 2011; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-
D'Alessandro, 2013). The following sub-section explores the link between personnel
satisfaction, school climate, personnel relationships, student success, leadership and how
each one effects the other.

Administrative Support

School administrators can inspire teacher retention by promoting a
progressive and positive school climate (e.g., working together, embracing differences,
and individuality) by delivering support (e.g. emotional encouragement, sufficient
preparation time, clear expectations, elimination of unnecessary paperwork), professional
learning opportunities, and mentoring opportunities (Cancio, 2014). Special educators
who consider school leaders as supportive and encouraging are more likely to stay in
their positions. In addition, special educators who experience high levels of support
report less frustration with responsibilities (e.g. job ambiguity, overload, interpersonal
conflict) and express greater job satisfaction (IRIS, 2013).

In 2006, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Center for Educational
Research (Caranikas-Walker, Shapley, & Cordeau, 2006), conducted a study to assist the
U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to promote
an increase in state responsibility and organize data-driven preparation and evaluation

processes that help states and schools to address requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004. The study was explicitly designed to analyze special education professionals' personnel needs.

As previously noted, the national shortage of qualified special education teachers is driving school districts around the country to hire ill-equipped personnel to fill the vacancies. The field of emotional/behavioral disorders encounters one of the most critical teacher deficiencies in the nation (AAEE 2000, 2004, 2015; Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S Department of Labor Statistics 2012-2013, 2016-2017; Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE), 2004). In response to the nation's growing concern for the teaching shortage, the agency's primary agenda was to analyze personnel concerns influencing students with disabilities in Texas. The results of the study were submitted to help the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to foster and retain a sufficient amount of special education experts highly qualified to teach students with disabilities.

The quantitative study (Caranikas-Walker et al., 2006) collected surveys from human resource administrators, special education administrators, special education teachers and service providers, throughout the state of Texas, to gain understanding of circumstances shaping conditions in the workplace. During the year 2004-05 questionnaires were distributed to special education administrators in 344 single, traditional districts and 160 charter schools. During that same year, questionnaires were also mailed to human resource administrators in 1,039 traditional school districts and 188 charter schools. Special education teacher candidates (9,193), who taught in public schools from all regions of the state, as well as 6,106 other service providers (e.g. speech therapists, occupational therapists, paraprofessional), were selected to participate in the

study. The organization of researchers regarded the sampling of respondents a reliable representation of the professional education system in Texas in terms of administrators, special education teachers and other service providers. The location, size and demographic make-up of the student population (45% Hispanic and other non-Caucasian) were an accurate generalization of the public school system in Texas.

According to the responses, the highest vacancy rates were among the teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disturbances, moderate to severe disabilities, and students with other disabilities. The findings of the feedback presented a view at barriers administrators encountered in retaining highly qualified special education teachers. The surveys indicated that teachers in these hard-to-staff positions are overwhelmed with: paperwork; job stress due to conflicting demands of the job and work overload; legal complexities of special education; insufficient prior knowledge of specific disabilities; lower salaries in relation to other local education agencies and fields outside of education; professional isolation and inadequate stipends for the job responsibilities (Caranikas-Walker et al., 2006).

Various administrators reported solutions to the shortages: increase in class size; blending funds to create inclusive settings; hiring retirees; using interns from alternative certification programs and hiring personnel with temporary certifications (Caranikas-Walker et al., 2006). Coincidently, the solutions used by these district leaders to temporarily fill the vacancies, were listed as complaints and reasons why special education teaching personnel were exiting the field. Many researchers would also argue that those provisional resolutions are some precise contributors to the dearth of special education teachers (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Albrecht et al., 2009; Billingsley et al., 2006;

Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997; Cancio, 2014; National School Climate

Council, 2007; Prather-Jones, 2011). These sources reinforce the "leaky bucket" (Moirs,

2014, ¶ 1) illustrated in Chapter I. The authors and scholars of this study offer possible

solutions and suggestions for administrators to implement which will be discussed in

Solutions for Increasing the Career Longevity of Teachers of Students with EBD, in the

latter section of this chapter.

      Instructing students with considerable behavior problems poses many challenges

for teachers, because they must concurrently repair academic deficits and execute

effective behavioral interventions. Students with emotional dis-regulation often plunge

significantly below grade level expectations and standards placing them even more at risk

of failing (Conroy, Alter, Boyd, & Bettini, 2014). Special and general education teachers,

often unofficially, adopt other roles such as advocate, social worker, parent

communicator, and mandated reporter (Sawka, Mccurdy, & Mannella, 2002).

      Vannest and Hagan-Burke (2010), claim the presence or absence of

administrative support directly influences school personnel's decisions to stay, move

positions, or leave the profession entirely. They argue that school leaders assign and

distribute responsibilities, but, teacher and administrative perceptions of those duties are

not balanced. School leaders have the ability to alleviate obligations and provide

additional time outside of the classroom for other work requirements (e.g. paperwork,

phone calls, due process, grading).

      Similar to the Texas Education Agency's research efforts, the CCBB

(Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olufunmilola, 2009), piloted an international survey of

776 teachers of students with emotional/behavioral disorders to investigate factors that

swayed teachers to stay or leave their current teaching positions. Of the respondents, 259 (33.4%) worked in schools located in an urban setting, 235 (30.3%) in rural settings, and 278 (35.8%) in suburban locations. The participants were representative of 45 U.S. states (757 respondents), twelve participants were citizens of Canada, and six respondents did not indicate geographical location.

The results indicated that administrative support was a key factor in teachers' decisions made to remain in their positions, resign or transfer (Albrecht et al., 2009). Participants defined active administrative support as: (a) availability; (b) access to curricula; (c) support with paperwork; (d) time to complete responsibilities; (e) understanding of EBD student population; (f) care and understanding; and (g) support with disciplinary issues. Those who did not experience adequate support (32.5%) reported job dissatisfaction and intended to leave in the short term (Albrecht et al., 2009).

Yet another quantitative study, representing and reviewing administrative support of EBD teachers was conducted by Cancio, Albrecht and Johns (2013). The team of scholars developed and distributed surveys to 408 active EBD teachers and members of the CCBD in the 2009-2010 school year (the CCBD is an international society of educators, yet the authors did not indicate details regarding the geographic location of the participants). Ninety percent of the teachers were white; 80% female; 51% had been teaching five or fewer years in their current positions; 27% had been in the education field (not in their current position) for five or fewer years and 52% taught students in the low socioeconomic bracket (ethnicity of the students was not specified). The classroom environments were primarily self-contained EBD rooms located in the public school system.

The results of the completed surveys replicated that of TEA's and the CCBD's results. Administration support significantly correlated with teachers' future direction in the EBD field. Those who considered administration to be supportive, acknowledged they were offered opportunities for growth, felt appreciated, trusted and sensed positive energy regarding school climate (p.89). James House (1981) proposed four areas of administrative support: Emotional support, instrumental support (curriculum, books, supplies), informational support (professional development, networking), and appraisal support. House's suggested characteristics of a successful administration, combined with the three more recent studies discussed, emphasize the importance of supportive leaders to reduce attrition and increase career longevity of EBD teachers.

The quantity and quality of support offered by a principal and other administrative leaders, can influence teacher retention. As cited earlier in this section, Cancio (2014) noted administration has the responsibility to promote a progressive and positive school climate by delivering support (e.g. emotional encouragement, sufficient preparation time, clear expectations, elimination of unnecessary paperwork), professional learning opportunities, and mentoring opportunities. School climate is a sequence of interrelated roles and responsibilities, one not trumping another. In order for a school to function harmoniously all dimensions must be in place and routinely implemented (IRIS, 2013).

The North Education Center (NEC), (mentioned on p. 21 of this paper) is a federal setting IV, separate day school and is one of several sites within the Intermediate 287 district. NEC provides services to the 8% of students in Hennepin County who have been unsuccessful in previous school placements, mainly due to high intensity behaviors,

academic failure, or 45 day suspensions from their serving district. The student

population encompasses many different racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, it is

primarily African American male. Most of the students receive free or reduced breakfast

and lunch. District 287 has several different sites and serves students with a variety of

special needs. A brief description of Intermediate District 287 can be found on the home

page of their website (http://www.district287.org/page.cfm?p=498) and reads as follows:

> Intermediate School District 287 is a leading education partner to
>
> Minnesota school districts and the premier provider of innovative
>
> educational support services. For more than 40 years, our member districts
>
> and other education professionals have trusted us to provide customized
>
> student services and educator resources so that all students get the best
>
> education possible.

Within approximately the last three years, the NEC has experienced a

significantly high teacher turnover rate. Nearly 40 percent of personnel moved schools or

left the district entirely, forcing the district to hire unlicensed professionals. In order to

fill the vacancies, among other outside applicants, administration hired many educational

assistants who had already been working at the NEC: permitting them to temporarily

teach with non-licensed community experts or variances granted by MDE. In response to

the significant attrition rate and multiple complaints and concerns from teachers,

educational assistants and other service providers (e.g. written letter to administration in

Role Overload section of this paper p.22-23), administration sent out a building wide

(approximately 220 personnel, with a 68% response rate) survey to collect personnel

perspectives regarding working conditions (e.g. morale, teacher prep time, work

overload, staff injuries, administration support, lunch breaks, stress levels, commitment

and job satisfaction). After reviewing the results of the survey, administration began to

take steps to repair and improve the school's morale and connectedness (additional detail

regarding the improvement plan will be discussed in the *Solutions* portion of this

chapter).

After reading the numerous studies and articles highlighting the connection

between positive school climate, administration support and teacher retention, this writer

pursued the perspective of Janet Christiansen, the assistant principal at NEC. The brief 20

minute interview on October 4th, 2016 with Ms. Christiansen, provided a viewpoint from

an administrator's perspective. This writer asked three general questions: (a) Did

administration make changes in response to the surveys you sent out? If so, what were

some of those changes? (b) What do you feel is the most challenging part of your job? (c)

What do you feel is the most important thing/s that foster a positive and healthy building

climate? The following, is a summary of Ms. Christiansen's responses, (excluding

positive interventions implemented by administration; which is included in the *Solutions*

section of this chapter):

I feel that so many professionals chose to leave the NEC because

of the combination of paperwork, due process, intense behaviors, and

resistance to change. Because of the overall job dissatisfaction of

personnel, administration is committed to making changes in hopes of

shifting the school climate and connectedness in a more positive direction.

The leadership team has received positive feedback from NEC staff,

regarding their efforts, and I feel that a sense of community is being

restored. I do admire all staff at NEC for being completely student centered and motivated.

The past couple of years I have been so exhausted and overworked that I frequently became ill. I often would work hours after others went home, and continued working over the weekend. A challenge for me is balancing work and finding time to enjoy life outside of school. We, as administrators, have similar responsibilities as teachers such as: paperwork; state and federal mandates; meeting parent needs; and handling student behaviors. Additional duties administrators have are: hiring new and qualified staff; accommodating MDE; attending trainings; investigations; completing staff evaluations; managing budgets; preparation for meetings; meeting and ensuring staff feel supported, recognized and valuable. I feel strongly that positive relationships, building wide, are the foundation to creating a healthy, enjoyable working environment. It is a balancing act and challenging to get it all done.

Janet Christensen, Assistant Principal (2016)

North Education Center, New Hope Minnesota

Lack of administration support has been linked to special education teacher attrition in many studies (Albrect et al., 2009; Bettini et al., 2015; Billingsley et al, 2006; Cancio et al., 2013; Caranikas-Walker et al., 2006; Hill, 2011; IRIS, 2013; Prather-Jones, 2011; Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). Administration's dependability is crucial in fostering a positive school environment and sense of belonging for both students and staff. Good leaders

understand the importance of a constructive and progressive (strong emphasis on problem solving, critical thinking, group work, and development of social skills). Valuable leaders are dedicated to the success of all students and cooperate with others to accomplish this goal (Cancio, 2014).

\Given the past and present absence of qualified special educators and the excessive turnover rate of those presently teaching, it is be predicted that the profession of the EBD teacher will continue to face challenges. Retaining and recruiting certified teachers may continue to be a national, state, district and administrative problem. Currently, the dilemma is exhausting budgets, stability, and quality of education (Prather-Jones, 2011). The research discussed in this paper indicates school leaders have the capacity to implement proactive supports to minimize work overload, stress and burnout. Possible solutions are discussed in *Solutions for Increasing the Career Longevity of Teachers of Students with EBD*, in the latter part of this chapter.

Deficient Special Education and EBD Teacher Preparation/Training.

A well-prepared teacher has more influence on a child's learning than any other element under school management (Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers, & Swanson, 2011). As professionals serving children and youth with exceptionalities, special educators are endowed with a superior trust by the community and recognized by professional licensure. Special educators have a responsibility to be guided by their professional principles and practice standards to ensure safe and effective delivery of special education services (CEC, 2015). Teacher preparation standards are built on the foundation that well-

prepared special education professionals are the cornerstones for the delivery of quality evidence-based practices (CEC, 2015).

Emphasis is placed on the importance of well-equipped teachers and the positive connection between a qualified teacher and student success. However, the United States reports that over the last three decades, there has been, and continues to be, a chronic shortage of qualified teachers--especially of qualified special educators (AAEE, 2015; CEC, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2015). The next section discusses the unceasing national shortage of qualified special education teachers, more specifically EBD teachers and explores the connection between deficient training, retention and attrition of personnel in the field of special education. Due to the extensive research available on the subject, this section is exceptionally detailed and extended to ensure the topic is thoroughly covered.

Regrettably, many general and special educators report they do not feel confident nor have sufficient training on effective classroom management skills. Furthermore, educators report they lack behavior management skills to adequately support students, especially those with significant behavior challenges (Capella, Kim, Hamre, Henry, Frazier, & Atkins, 2012). The number of individuals practicing special education without appropriate credentials and preparation continued to grow from about 1993 through 2005 and since then has remained somewhat constant (Boe, 2014). Today, at least 20,000 U.S. special educators are not properly licensed (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2015).

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* (Meitrodt, 2013) reiterated that, nationwide, there is a growing concern regarding the lack of qualified teachers, educating students with disabilities. Minnesota has one of the fastest growing populations of students with special needs. Teachers report that the behaviors of students are becoming more dangerous adding to the already burdensome workload these teachers encounter. Students with significant behavior and emotional challenges are placed in classrooms with minimal support, minimal resources, and unqualified teachers. According to federal data, special education teachers are quitting at a much faster rate than their general education peers (AAEE, 2015; Boe & Cook, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2015). Nationwide, 18 % of the 269,800 teachers who left the profession in 2008 were special education teachers--nationwide. That percentage remained fixed over the last seven years (Sindelar, McCray, Brownell, & Lignugaris/Kraft, 2014). In an attempt to solve the shortage, school districts place inexperienced teachers in the most difficult classrooms (AAEE, 2015).

The American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE, 2015) guides its members to resources and unites with colleges, emphasizing superior standards in educator training programs, employment, and retention of professionals. The association provided results from a study conducted during the 2014-2015 year in its *Supply and Demand Report.* Surveys were completed by 161 colleges and 144 school districts around the country uncovering the nation's supply-and-demand status in education. The participating universities, unnamed, were located in various regions of the country, thus providing a sound representation of higher education institutions in the U.S. The contributing public

school demographics consisted of 30.9% urban; 47.5% suburban; and 12.6% rural, however, specific locations and names were not included in the details.

Both colleges and school districts reported considerable shortages in the field of EBD. In fact, the participating colleges reported that the greatest student shortage was in EBD compared to other undergraduate education students. Students pursuing a licensure in cognitive disabilities was the second greatest shortage and severe profound was listed third. Public schools described EBD as the second hardest to staff behind educators of the severe/profound cognitively impaired. Eleven percent of public schools suggested underprepared teachers as the leading challenge in EBD teacher recruitment.

AAEE (2015) described traditional preparation as students completing college/university coursework plus fulfilling licensure requirements; non-traditional preparation includes alternative certification programs, subject matter experts without pedagogy, temporary or provisional certification; emergency hires are personnel employed without licensure or background in teaching. Nationally, on average, 9% of the teachers hired in the past year do not have traditional preparation, either being hired with nontraditional preparation or as an emergency hire. Rural (12%) and urban (11%) districts were more likely than suburban districts to have hired teachers without traditional preparation in the last year.

Cancio (2014), noted that one-third of new special education teachers leave before their third year in the profession. If 9% of teachers are being hired with nontraditional preparation or as an emergency hire (AAEE, 2015), these teachers will burnout and exit within one year's time. As Conroy et al. (2014) stated, "There is little margin for error

when working with students who engage in challenging behaviors" (p. 324). Conroy et al. (2014) propose three essential components for preparing a high-quality EBD teacher: research, theory, and practice. Yet again, if 9% of new hires are receiving less than, or in some cases, no traditional teacher college education, they may not have an opportunity to place theory in to controlled practice before entering the classroom. Ultimately, positioning an under qualified teacher as case manager for the most challenging students is a set up for exhaustion and burnout.

Institutions of higher education (IHE) have had to adjust to an enrollment decrease in traditional teacher preparation programs and create alternative programs. As reported in a study conducted by Lusk and Bullock (2013), in 2009-2010 alternative IHE-based and alternative non-IHE-based curriculums required no student teaching or clinical experience in comparison to the traditional IHE-based courses that required 100 hours of clinical experience prior to student teaching. Although colleges and universities responded to the enrollment shortage by offering alternate routes to obtaining a teaching license, the short-term fix is criticized. Alternative teacher preparation programs have been criticized for graduating students who lack preparedness for the classroom. The Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, (2015) and the CEC (2015) expressed concerns that alternative programs are: deficient in teacher competencies and standards, detached from the realities of modern day educational settings, and provide little to no clinical or field experience for pre-service teachers (Lusk & Bullock, 2013).

The CEC is the largest special education organization in the United States. The CEC has, for years, researched standards needed by teachers who serve children with

unique educational needs. The CEC works at local, state and national levels to ensure the standards are embedded in state licensure frameworks and used in the national accreditation process. Their 12 standards follow the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) guidelines for program standards. Teacher preparation programs pursuing national recognition from the CEC and CAEP use the standards as a framework. The 12 standards are categorized under two principle benchmarks: professional preparation standards and professional practice standards (CEC, 2015).

For approximately three decades, refining quality preparation and continuing the growth of valuable special educators has been surpassed by three variables: a persistent shortage of qualified personnel to provide special education services, unequal distribution of well-prepared special education personnel, and working conditions that work against the retention of well-prepared special education personnel (Boe, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2015).

The CEC (2015) reports that the hiring of ill-equipped teachers affects the learning of over one million exceptional learners. IRIS (2013) recounted that 50% of novice teachers will exit the profession entirely within the first five years. The Teacher Attrition and Mobility report (Goldring et al., 2014) predicted that 7% of beginning teachers would leave the profession within three years. This writer was unable to find exact data on the percentage of novice teachers leaving the field who were not properly prepared or not fully licensed, it is likely that that many cycling in and out are the unprepared (Boe, 2014).

In an attempt to determine the importance of the CEC standards for EBD teachers, Lusk and Bullock (2013) conducted a study involving 105 graduates from a designated

master's degree program in special education with an emphasis in EBD. The program was a segment of a special education department in a major suburban university in the southwestern part of the U.S. The IHE program had been a National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and CEC approved program since its foundation in the 1980s.

The survey consisted of nine CEC standards of professional practice (i.e., foundations; development and characteristics of learners; individual learning differences; instructional strategies; learning environments/social interactions; instructional planning; assessment; professional and ethical practice; and collaboration). Most of the participants received a master's in special education with concentration in emotional disorders. The majority of subjects were teaching in suburban schools with EBD students, for an average of eight years. Overall, on a scale of 1-4, all of the participants considered all nine of the CEC standards to be important in their profession. Teachers with the most experience regarded the standards to be more important than teachers with five or fewer years of practice.

Although Lusk and Bullock (2013) highlighted the importance of the CEC standards in the profession of EBD teachers, they did not investigate whether or not the participants judged themselves proficient in implementing those standards in the classroom. A team of scholars, Gable, Tonelson, Sheth, Wilson, and Park (2012), delved deeper into discovering the knowledge, skill set, and confidence of general and special educators who work with students with emotional disorders.

The subjects Gable and his colleagues (2012) chose to participate in their study were in cooperation with a Mid-Atlantic state department of education, which included

the states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C. Of

the 1,588 general educators involved in the study 46% taught in suburban schools; 40%

in rural schools; and 14% in urban schools. Of those teachers, 32% had 1-5 years of

experience, 24% had 6-10 years of experience, and 40% had 10 or more years of

experience. Four percent held temporary licenses and 96% were fully licensed.

The remaining participants consisted of 1,472 special educators, 84% of them

worked with EBD students. Forty-four percent of the special educators were employed in

suburban districts, 34% were employed in rural districts, and 22% were employed in

urban districts. Two percent had less than one year's experience; 37% had five years of

experience; 26% had 6-10 years of experience; 35% had more than 10 years of

experience. Out of the special educators, 89% were fully licensed and 11% held

temporary licensure. One notable factor to mention is that 7% more special educators

held temporary licenses than general educators implying, perhaps, that special education

positions are harder to staff. Consequently, schools are forced to hire unlicensed,

inexperienced personnel to fill the vacant positions.

Eighty-five percent of general educators and 91% of special educators did not feel

adequately prepared to use common classroom practices such as: curricular

modifications, cooperative learning, peer assisted and peer mediated interventions,

conflict resolution, social skills, and anger management. A combined total of 8% of

teachers indicated that they were not equipped, nor did they use, a system of Functional

Behavioral Interventions (FBA) or Positive Behavior Interventions (BIP), which are

evidence-based practices proven to be effective for students with EBD (CEC, 2015;

Conroy et al., 2014; Kauffman & Landrum, 2013). Conversely, one area in which both

groups of professionals agreed that they frequently or continuously used, and felt

confident executing were school-wide rules and expectations and crisis intervention

plans. Both general and special educators implied deficiencies in sufficient preparation in

recognized, evidence-based procedures to develop purposeful and effective interventions.

Neither group made use of distinct evidence based practices (e.g., peer mediated

interventions, conflict resolution, or peer assisted learning).

Another team of researchers, Kindzierski et al. (2013), conducted a study about

the unacceptable EBD teacher turnover rate. The study was designed to assess teacher

preparation programs and their competency to prepare highly qualified professionals

possessing skills necessary to tolerate an extended career in serving students with

emotional disabilities. The scholars' hypothesis suggested that a well-prepared teacher is

more likely to remain in his or her position past the year of entrance. This assumption

provoked curiosity and research exploring the correlation between EBD teacher training

and career longevity.

The sample size in this study consisted of 88 participants from three private

schools located in a 30-mile radius of a mid-sized northeastern city and serving students

with EBD (specific location and demographics not included). The students were

identified as having significant emotional and behavior difficulties and received services

in residential or day treatment centers. The feedback was provided via open-ended

surveys; obtaining opinions and attitudes of selected personnel's portrayal of what they

considered important. Sixty-five percent of the participants had five or fewer years of

experience, 35% did not have an undergraduate degree in special education (i.e., under

qualified), and 30% of the contributors were under 30 years of age. Seventy percent were female, 84% were Caucasian, 2% Latino, 1% Native American, and 12% did not respond.

The responses indicated that the majority of the teachers felt that preparation programs lacked depth in terms of specific content knowledge, special education laws and procedures, behavior management, and pedagogy. Research shows that implementing best practice strategies in the classroom can reduce disruptive behaviors and increase learning (Hightower et al., 2011). Best practice interventions include: teaching a balanced and integrated curriculum, differentiating instruction, and encouraging active learning. Twenty-five percent of reactions on the surveys noted that pre-service training was deficient in best practice instruction and 23% indicated that preparation programs lacked basic classroom management instruction.

More than half the teachers encountered difficulties in meeting multiple instructional needs and wanted more training in differentiated instruction. It was also indicated that crisis prevention and intervention was a skill most were learning on the job. Most teachers had not been sufficiently prepared in pre-service training. Although some special education law was covered, the content was not studied extensively. The rigor of due process was unexpected and overwhelming for the novice teachers. Finally, 30% of respondents disclosed disappointment in terms of their field experience prior to managing their own classrooms.

Extensive exploration of research and data related to deficient teacher preparation, prompted this writer to interview three novice teachers. The purpose was to provide an authentic perspective regarding their experience as beginning EBD teachers. The interviewees were all currently employed at the North Education Center (NEC), one of

many sites within Intermediate District 287. A description of Intermediate District 287 and the NEC are embedded in the *Administrative Support* section of this paper (see page 31).

Intermediate District 287 experienced a large turnover of special education teachers over the last few years. The NEC is just one school significantly impacted by the loss of special education personnel. For the 2016-2017 school year, to fill the vacancies, the NEC issued 22 special permissions approved by the Minnesota Board of Teaching. Six of the permissions were granted to hires in the elementary EDB program, four in the middle school and high school EBD program, three in the Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) program, and nine in the Asperger's syndrome program.

Minnesota issues three different types of special permissions. A Non-licensed Community Expert can be issued to an individual who is not a licensed teacher, does not hold a bachelor's degree, and who does not qualify for Minnesota licensure. However, the candidate must possess a specific area of expertise that is related to the teaching assignment. Each case is judged individually and is dependent on a district's needs, the positon to be filled, the candidate's prior experience, and Minnesota's Board of Teaching analysis of the application. Each candidate must apply annually. Innovative Program Waivers may be granted to a fully licensed individuals to teach out of their subject area and to accommodate experimental or innovative programs. Again, candidates must apply annually. However, a bachelor's degree is required in this case. Discretionary Variance requests may be granted to teachers who hold a bachelor's degree and a valid full professional teaching license to teach in subjects or fields for which the teacher is not

currently licensed. Similar to the other special permissions, a discretionary variance must be applied for annually (MDE, 2015).

The three NEC elementary teachers were deliberately chosen because of the circumstances under which they were hired. All three of the novice IEP case managers were hired due to the qualified teacher shortage at the NEC. For confidentiality purposes, only the first names are used when describing their individual experiences. Each teacher was asked the same three questions; First, what prior experience/preparation did you have with EBD students, what has been the most difficult part of your job, identify the most valuable teaching skill that should be included in a preparatory program. It is important to note that because the NEC is a setting IV separate day school, all teachers are expected to teach all subjects in their classrooms and act as IEP case managers for each student.

The first NEC teacher, Andre, was a young black male in his late twenties. Andre did not have a college education and was not enrolled in higher education at the time of the interview. The district issued him a Community Expert special permission for the 2016-2017 school year. His classroom consisted of five middle school age EBD/DCD students. Prior to his teaching assignment, Andre was an EA in an EBD classroom for two years at NEC. He indicated that because of his former EBD experience, the district felt that he was a valuable candidate to fill the open teaching position. Andre was very certain that he did not want to teach the following year and indicated that it would be difficult for him to finish the current year (Andre, personal correspondence, November, 14, 2016).

The most challenging component of the job for Andre was the due process (i.e., paper work; legal requirements). He said that it was impossible to complete IEPs, FBAs, BIPs, and evaluations with no formal training. Andre admitted that his assigned mentor had been helpful, yet regardless of the support, the amount of work was unbearable and he had to complete most of it outside of contract hours. Because of Andre's negative experience with paperwork requirements, he felt that pre-service training programs should provide a solid foundation for beginning teachers in terms of legal documents (e.g., IEP, FBA, BIP). In addition, he considered differentiated instruction and diversity education valuable in a school with unique learners and an ethnic student population similar to NEC's (Andre, personal correspondence, November, 14, 2016).

The second NEC teacher was Brielle, a young black woman in her early thirties. At the time of the interview she did not have a college degree, but was enrolled in college to obtain a license in EBD. She was in her third year of teaching a classroom serving elementary EBD students. Prior to being hired as a Community Expert, Brielle was an EA in the Alternative Learning Center (ALC). The program served students who were unable to receive their high school diploma in a traditional school setting. Although most of the students were not diagnosed with behavior disorders, they often exhibited extremely challenging behaviors. Her experience in the ALC provided Brielle with some prior knowledge and resources in managing difficult situations and students. Consequently, Brielle said that the behaviors had not been the most difficult part of the job. She, like Andre, mentioned the burdensome paper work and due process responsibilities. She seriously considered quitting after the first year. She stayed due to the support she received from her team. She still regarded the paper work as the most discouraging part of the job.

At the time of the interview, Brielle planned to continue teaching EBD students. Reflecting on her college course studies, she recalled only one course dedicated to due process, which she considered inadequate. The pre-service teaching preparation program also did not concentrate enough on diversity and cultural competence. According to Brielle, more emphasis in this area would enhance teachers' abilities to better connect with families and students. Brielle believed that challenging students needed to build trust and develop relationships before they are able to learn. Understanding urban neighborhoods and communities the students live in, help create solid relationships. Brielle believed that many of the skills needed on the job such as behavior and time management, organization, and direct instruction were learned on the job and came from experience. However, skills such as due process and special education law needed more formal training (Brielle, personal correspondence, November 16, 2016).

The third NEC teacher, Chris, was a white male in his late twenties teaching his first year in a classroom serving elementary and middle school students with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and EBD. Chris obtained his K-6 teaching license through the experimental *Urban Teacher Program* in St Paul. Although Chris had a teaching license it did not authorize him as highly qualified in emotional behaviors or fetal alcohol disorders. As a result, Chris was hired on a variance special permission to fill a vacancy in a classroom that experienced teacher turnover the last three years. While in college, Chris worked at a setting IV school in Minneapolis as an EA. The school's 90% EBD student population helped Chris build up resilience and skills for dealing with challenging behaviors.

Chris's college education focused heavily on preparing future teachers to educate urban, hard-to-staff communities. He felt that his pre-service training allowed him to better understand his student's families and their community experiences. Unfortunately, because Chris's preparation did not include special education training, he said that due process had been completely overwhelming. He had no formal training, and like Andre and Brielle, he considered education in legal documentation and paper work to be extremely important. Chris indicated that he was probably not returning for the 2017-2018 school year. He considered the amount of required work he completed outside of contract hours, did not match the salary. He considered teaching in a general education school, where the workload would be more commensurate with the yearly salary.

IRIS (2013) inferred that teachers who received thorough training are more likely to use applicable practices and to stay in their positions longer than those who have inadequate preparation (CEC, 2008, 2015). IRIS also implied that teachers assigned to jobs that complement their expertise and experience, are more likely to stay. The CEC's goal in terms of certification and qualification states that professionals guarantee that only persons considered eligible by having met state/local minimum requirements are hired as teachers, administrators, and service support providers for individuals with exceptionalities (CEC, 2008, 2015).

Based on the research evidence provided through research and national data, highly qualified teachers are more effective, competent, and more likely to remain in the field for a longer period of time. On a national, state and local level the ideal scenario would be for all general and special educators to hold the appropriate credentials.

Unfortunately, the demand for certified special education teachers is much greater than the supply; resulting in the hiring of inexperienced and ill-equipped personnel.

The most common strategies used by principals to cope with vacancies are: increasing teaching loads of existing teachers, hiring under-qualified and uncertified teachers, and employing temporary teachers for long periods of time (Cancio, 2014). Districts and administrators are faced with a challenging crisis situation. Certainly, solutions are limited. Nevertheless, overcrowding classrooms and hiring under-qualified teachers are only temporary solutions to a relentless problem. Adding more students to a classroom intensifies a teacher's workload, which is one contributing factor of attrition (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Cancio et al., 2013). Likewise, placing unprepared teachers in a special education classroom is a method deemed unsuccessful (Hightower et al., 2011).

Yet another obstacle is the criticism that even traditionally prepared teachers are not equipped to manage the responsibilities of the job. As described in previous paragraphs, teachers feel defective in numerous areas of special education. Training in specific content knowledge such as: special education law, pedagogy, behavior management, cultural competence, behavior management, and especially due process (i.e., mandated legal requirements) is poor (Gable et al., 2012; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lusk & Bullock, 2013). Even more concerning is that fact that IHEs are launching alternative preparation programs that minimize requirements and require little to no field experience (Lusk & Bullock, 2013).

Deficient special education teacher preparation is just one of many factors influencing teacher turnover and attrition. Role overload and poor school climate also contribute to the special education teacher shortage. The forthcoming section investigates

suggested solutions to role overload, poor school climate, and deficient teacher preparation. The proposed solutions are simply an attempt to increase the career longevity of not only EBD teachers, but the entire special education teaching sector.

Solutions for Increasing the Career Longevity of Teachers of Students with EBD

Better developed teacher preparation/training programs

Working with students who exhibit challenging behaviors is one of the most substantial problems facing teachers today. Magnifying this problem is a dearth of teachers who are accessible and qualified to work with these students (Cancio, 2014; Lusk & Bullock, 2013; Oliver & Reschly, 2010). Furthermore, some teachers who received either alternative or traditional pre-service training express disappointment in terms of preparedness and necessary skill set entering the classroom (Boe, 2014; Capella et al., 2012; Conroy et al., 2014; Lusk & Bullock, 2013). Deficient teacher preparation is one of the driving forces behind general and special education teacher attrition (Kindzierski et al., 2013).

Many districts face teacher shortages that threaten their ability to deliver a quality education to all children (AAEE, 2015; Boe 2014). Rather than implementing temporary solutions that often depend on underprepared or out-of-field teachers, policymakers should examine research for effective strategies to develop a high-quality and viable teaching workforce. The following is a collaboration of policies and review of research regarding possible solutions concerning deficient teacher preparation.

Although the problem may be more substantial in the field of special education, the teaching profession, as a whole, is at great risk (AAEE, 2015). Because special

education is just one sector of the teaching profession, education reform, in its entirety, is discussed, prior to examining special education and EBD teacher preparation.

In response to the qualified teacher deficiency, the Obama Administration made it a national priority to support teachers. Arne Duncan, the former United States Secretary of Education, acknowledged that evaluation and reform of teacher preparation programs needed to be of primary importance. He emphasized that critical shortage areas such as science, math, technology, engineering, and special education had lacked in the rigorous, clinical experience that prepares teachers for the realities of the classroom and today's diverse student population (White House, 2016).

He also stated that the teaching workforce does not reflect the diversity of the nation's students. The student body is increasingly black or Hispanic, however, the teachers educating them are generally white. Traditional and alternative Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) teaching programs could be preparing highly qualified teachers to effectively educate and support all students regardless of ethnic background, social-economic circumstances, or disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Arne Duncan was replaced by Dr. John King as the U.S. Secretary of Education in 2016. In February of 2017, President Donald Trump appointed Betsy DeVos as the Secretary of Education.

The Obama Administration proposed several programs to strengthen the teaching workforce. Specific goals in those programs were to recruit highly qualified professionals, expand responsibility of instructor readiness programs, decrease the racial disparity of education personnel, reexamine competency-based salary increase, advance

teacher coordinated efforts, and re-connect communities with their schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Education initiatives applied by the Obama Administration, may not be of top priority for the recently inaugurated (2017) executive council. Below are some of the reform initiatives from the Obama years.

- *The Race to the Top* was an initiative designed to encourage states to practice higher standards, improve teacher efficacy, use classroom data to assess areas of needed improvement, and to implement plans to assist at-risk schools (White House, 2016).

- *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) was a U.S. Act of Congress, which reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*; it included Title I arrangements applying to disadvantaged students. It upheld standard-based education reform. It established measurable goals to boost individual performance. Teachers were expected to be highly qualified in the areas they were teaching. The Act required states to develop basic skills tests. In order to get government financing, states needed to submit test results for review and evaluation (Kauffman & Landrum, 2006).

- On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the *The Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), a reauthorization and expansion of NCLB's key goals: created a initiative to help safeguard fairness and opportunity for all students, ensured that poor performing schools were held accountable and safeguarded educators' decision making privileges at local, state and federal levels. The bipartisan bill gave more authority to the states (White House, 2016).

- *The Respect Project* which stands for Recognizing, Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching was a project instigated by the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of *The Respect Project* was to connect with teachers, district leaders, unions, teaching organizations, and future teaching candidates to ignite discussion that would result in solid procedures and an achievable makeover of the teaching profession. The Project also aspired to recruit novice, yet highly qualified, individuals from diverse backgrounds to decrease the disparity of culturally diverse professionals in the classroom. Obama's 2013 budget proposal included a $5 billion grant divided up among states committed to changing and improving education.

  The Respect Project had six key elements: recruit intelligent candidates into education and provide adequate preparation; create opportunities for professional growth and development while providing rewards for high quality performance; generate a supportive working environment; assess and celebrate high quality education in the classroom and at the administrative level; remove incompetent individuals; and provide the best, most qualified teachers and support services for those in need of it most (e.g., low-income students, English learners, and students with special needs); and continue with improvements after the grant has ended (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

- *Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program* (TQP) is a program started by the U.S. Department of Education in 2016. The Department announced four new grants totaling $5.1 million. The TQP Grant Program aspired to increase student performance by improving the preparation of potential teachers and the

professional development trainings for existing teachers; holding teacher preparation programs at IHEs responsible for preparing capable, certified or licensed and valuable teachers; and recruiting potential individuals, including minorities and individuals from other occupations, into the teaching force (White House, 2016).

- *State Personnel Development (SPD) Grants Program* is a program created by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs to focus on professional development. The SPD provides grants to assist state educational agencies (SEA) to improve personnel preparation and professional development of individuals providing services for early intervention and education to students with disabilities. Ninety percent of the fund is allowed to be spent on professional development, recruitment and retention of qualified special educators. Ten percent could be disbursed on reforming teacher certification and recertification of both general and special educators and alternative routes for state certification (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

- As a result of the *State Personnel Development Grants Program* the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Special Education Division received a $5.5 million, five-year State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). The grant supports and improves disparities in special education, resources, technology, and staff development. The grant would provides opportunities for MDE to collaborate and partner with IHE to enhance special education teacher preparation (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

- *Higher Education Act* (HEA) of 1965. It was reauthorized in 1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1986, 1992, 1998, and 2008. The HEA was initially developed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The purpose of the Act was to increase financial aid to low- and middle-income families, help enrich programming for smaller and less sophisticated colleges, and expand college and university libraries (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a).

- *The Teacher Preparation Regulations* (2016) are a set of regulations for the teacher preparation program accountability system under title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 (revised). The provisions require the compilation and circulation of significant data on the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. The rules require states to report, annually, on recent graduates, their placements, success in the classroom, and permanency in the profession. States are expected to gather feedback from novice teachers in terms of their satisfaction in the preparation program and preparedness to enter the classroom. Finally, novice teachers are evaluated by measuring student growth on the learning outcomes and other decided state assessments (U.S Department of Education, 2016).

The Obama Administration's efforts to reform and improve education in the Unites States was made a priority (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Some believe the efforts were successful, others may argue they were a waste of money. The 2017 inauguration of President Donald Trump will undoubtedly bring new ideas for the future that will produce more change.

To advance special education teacher quality and training, law-makers, administrators, and educators need to address long lasting concerns regarding shortages and insufficient preparation of special education teachers, as well as general education teachers serving students with disabilities in their classrooms. In response to the shortage, licensure strategies have been designed to resolve quantity issues with little to no responsiveness or research to the impact on teacher quality (Aldeman et al, 2011).

The emergence of fast-track, alternative routes to licensure (i.e., online courses), reflect special education's urgency to fill the vacancies. The setback with these licensure strategies is that they often fail to communicate, emphasize, and support the concept of expertise. Furthermore, many general educators are unprepared to educate students with unique needs especially those with behavioral challenges (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010).

One recommended movement to help resolve the teaching shortage, is to redesign and improve teacher training for both general and special education. The desired outcome--to place better prepared teachers in the classroom, increase self-efficacy for both students and staff, while simultaneously increasing career longevity. While reviewing the most recent research, five recurring trends surfaced addressing promising changes and improvements in pre-service preparation for both general and special education teachers: cultural responsiveness, alternative routes to licensure, emphasis on Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards, Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Support Systems (PBIS), and teacher residencies. These five fundamentals build a framework for advancements in teacher preparation. The following

section delineates the five proposed shifts in teacher education that would, theoretically, generate higher quality teaching professionals.

Culturally Responsive. Students' backgrounds and experiences affect how they participate in education. Knowing and understanding individual students and their cultural backgrounds can help eliminate labeling and misinterpretations. Students often act out when they are not understood (Billingsley, Brownell & Israel, 2013). The diversity of the student population is growing and changing. In fact 56% of the student population in the United States is projected to be of color by 2024 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). Yet, the teaching workforce remains predominately white (category of individuals who self- identify as white and non-Hispanic). According to the most recent U.S. Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a nationally illustrative survey of teachers and principals, only 18% of teaching professionals are teachers of color (Goldring et al., 2014). Physical, behavioral, and cognitive disabilities are realities and challenges that all cultures and races experience. Therefore, in this paper, special and general education will be classified as a collective unit in the following section's discussion of cultural responsiveness.

Because the student population is becoming increasingly diverse, it is important to include recent national statistics reflecting the significant challenges individuals of color are facing in in our nation's schools, particularly the African American student population. According to the most recent SASS survey (Goldring et al., 2014), the U.S. Department of Education reported that African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be expelled than White students. The dropout rate of African Americans is 33%, surpassed only by students identified as Native American (39%). Students of color are more likely

to be referred for special education services--Native Americans and African Americans had 1.6 times and 1.5 times greater representation in special education than all Asian, Hispanic, or White students (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015).

There is also an overrepresentation of black students identified as EBD in the school system. This is exceptionally disconcerting considering that, on average, EBD students score below the 25th percentile in reading, math and written expression and are expelled or suspended more frequently than students with any other disability. When comparing African American high school student dropout rates with Hispanic, Asian , and White students, African Americans have the highest dropout and unemployment rate in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2016).

Low-income and students of color tend to have less-effective teachers with characteristics such as: lack of certification in the subjects they are teaching; failure to pass accreditation exams; enrollment at underrated undergraduate institutions; and poor performance in undergraduate school. Low-income and students of color, also experience greater turnover rates among teachers at their schools (Hightower et al., 2011). The national data predicts a grim future for students of color, if efforts are not directed toward improving the situation (U.S Department of Education, 2016b).

Compared with their Caucasian colleagues, teachers of color are more likely to have higher expectations of students of color, challenge matters of racism, operate as cultural advisors, and create trusting relationships with students with whom they share a cultural background (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). Given this knowledge, it appears beneficial to develop a diverse teaching workforce. Recruiting, hiring and

retaining teachers of color is difficult due to the limited amount of students of color enrolling in college after high school. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). In 2011-2012, 62% of students enrolled in bachelor degree programs were white, 14%were black, 13% were Hispanic, and 11% consisted of other ethnic backgrounds. Seventy three percent of students registered in education programs were white (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b).

The possible solutions to increasing cultural awareness and be culturally responsive in our nation's increasingly diverse schools, is twofold. One essential priority should be to prepare both general and special education candidates how to respond, interact, instruct, and respect today's diverse student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b; White House, 2016). A second project of importance, is to recruit and create a more diverse teaching workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b).

The *Center for American Progress* (CAP) analyzes and offers policy proposals. After extensive review of current research, national data, and public policy, CAP offered recommendations for recruiting and retaining teachers of color while simultaneously preparing all teachers to better serve diverse student populations. The following are CAP's five recommendations for improvement of cultural responsiveness in the nation's educational system (Partee, 2014):

- Reformation of teacher preparation programs and measures-The goal is to prepare graduates for success in the most challenging schools. Pre-service students would be required to complete clinical experience in high-demand, hard-to-staff, urban, and diverse schools for an extensive period-of-time. Alternative (e.g., online

courses) and traditional routes to licensure should have the same standard expectations for clinical experience.

- Better communication and collaboration between teacher-preparation programs and the school districts likely to hire the graduates. This would insure that the training programs are preparing future teachers for the needs of the students in those districts.

- Design preparation frameworks to concentrate on teaching certain subjects to English language learners, students with special needs, and low-income families. Pre-service educators should learn skills to communicate and engage with families in all cultural and socio-economic brackets.

- Teacher evaluation results should be classified by experience level, race, ethnicity, gender, and age. These structures should be used to assess teachers' value and efficacy levels, and to improve teachers with superior professional supports.

- Provide incentives to attract and retain qualified teachers of all ethnic backgrounds. For example: student loan assistance, professional development, and advancement opportunities in public schools.

CAP is committed to initiating a critical exchange among educators, legislators, and representatives of communities of color. CAP believes that teachers of color are an essential component to the success of students of color. Another organization that has advocated for racial awareness and cultural competence is the National Education Association (NEA).

The National Education Association (NEA) is the largest labor union in the United States. It represents public school teachers, support personnel, faculty at colleges and universities, retired educators, and college students preparing to become teachers. The NEA advocates for education professionals and reinforces the promise of a free public education for all students. The NEA is devoted to teacher preparation and solid quantifiable training. Their belief is that classroom teachers are one of the most important school-centered factors guiding student success (Coffman & Patterson, 2014).

The NEA considers racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity to be a powerful asset to American society. The demand for culturally competent educators continues to grow as the nation's student population becomes more diverse. The NEA deems cultural competence as crucial in the 21st century. Cultural competence, is the ability to create a context and awareness of one's own cultural identity, while having the ability to understand group differences. Being culturally responsive as a teacher is an ethical responsibility to get to know students' families, neighborhoods, and communities. The NEA believes that all teaching preparation programs should include training in cultural competence (Coffman & Patterson, 2014). Professional development opportunities should also be provided to inform existing educators about cultural responsiveness.

Suggestions have been made to attract and recruit students from diverse backgrounds into the field of education; making higher education more accessible through alternative avenues (i.e., online courses), providing loan forgiveness programs, and recruiting promising individuals of color from disadvantaged communities (Partee, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016b; White House, 2016). A snapshot of one such program, *America's College Promise* (ACP), is a plan announced by President

Obama in 2015. The goal of the plan is for participating community colleges to use grant money to provide the first two years of education free of charge.

The promise of college is too often overshadowed by the thought of loan debt and lack of opportunity due to environmental circumstances. The mission of ACP, is to help students launch their scholarly journey, eliminating the financial setback that can repel students from a higher education. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, 2016). Several programs resulted from ACP such as the *Tennessee Promise Today, Boston Community College Promise Today, Urban Community College: Long Beach College Promise, Rural Community Promise: Darney Promise*, and the *Employer-Community College Partnership*. More explicit information can be found in the U.S. Department of Education's, 2016 *America's College Promise Playbook.*

Other programs such as the *Boston Public School High School to Teacher Program*, the *Call Me Mister* (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) initiative, and the Teach Tomorrow in Oakland (TTO) program have committed to advancing equity by recruiting members into the teaching profession (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). More specific details on these recruitment efforts can be found in the U.S. Department of Education's 2016 report, *The State of Racial Diversity in the Education Workforce*.

Teachers of color are considerably underrepresented in public schools, yet the number of students of color is quickly increasing (Coffman & Patterson, 2014). We must make sure that all students- primarily the new surge of learners coming from different ethnic, social, and language backgrounds -have opportunities to receive, not only superior education, but also high-quality and proportionately diverse teaching professionals.

Expanding teacher diversity will help guarantee that today's students are equipped to thrive in today's society (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b).

Alternative Routes to Licensure. General and special education preparation programs must be held to the same high expectations. In fact, there should be an intersection of special and general education teacher training at some level throughout preparation courses. Students with disabilities often participate in the mainstream classroom for a portion of their school day. Therefore, it is important for general educators to acquire a special education knowledge base (e.g., IEP, FBA, BIP, special education law, differentiating curriculum), to better understand and meet the needs of all students in the classroom. Securing special education content knowledge can also fosters valuable communication and collaboration between case managers and mainstream teachers (Blanton, Pugach, & Boveda, 2014). Yet, both general and special educators are entering the education workforce feeling inadequately prepared and challenged to meet the needs of diverse and disabled students. These challenges are contributors to vacancies and high teacher turnover rates (Aldeman et al., 2011; Blanton et al., 2014; Gable et al., 2012; Kindierski et al., 2013).

One proposed solution to help recruit teachers, primarily in hard to staff positions (e.g., special education, math, science, low-income, urban) in both general and special education, is alternative on-line technology based instruction, otherwise known as distance education. (Hirsch, Kennedy, Haines, Thomas, & Alves, 2015; Janssen et al., 2016; Smith & Tyler, 2011). On the opposing side, others consider alternative routes to licensure deficient in the preparation of highly qualified, well prepared professionals to

enter the education workforce (Aldeman et al., 2011: Coffman & Patterson, 2014: Conroy et al., 2014; Kindzierski et al., 2013).

Distance education (web-based) is obtainable in various forms. Hybrid instruction delivers education through both face-to-face classroom centered instruction and through interactive web-based instruction. Another variation is to receive instruction entirely through technology, minus the direct interaction (Lusk & Bullock, 2013). Supporters contend that either one of these substitutions for traditional (formal) preparation are appropriate and effective responses to addressing the teaching shortage. Those advocating for alternative teacher preparation programs offer valid arguments supporting their effectiveness (Janssen et al., 2016). The advantages and drawbacks of distance and hybrid education are discussed in the following paragraphs.

On-line training permits universities to extend its facilities to a wider range of the population by offering individuals in rural communities and globally to obtain a degree and/or licensure (Janssen et al., 2016). In addition, online coursework is appealing to candidates who have families, are working full time, or would be commuting long distances. Also, when considering that the new generation of college graduates are digital natives, it seems a plausible direction for contemporary teacher preparation training. Future general and special education teaching candidates are primarily a generation that responds best to instruction that is on-demand, flexible, easily accessible, interactive, and individualized. Online courses are also appealing to universities because they reduce issues related to classroom space and scheduling, while simultaneously increasing admission and revenue (Janssen et al., 2016).

Pre-service training that is technology based can model devices, software, and programs used in modern day primary, middle and high schools. Presently, special education utilizes a variety of devices and software equipped to support students with particular disabilities and challenges. Students in mainstream education require personnel that are knowledgeable and skilled in technology.

Cultural responsiveness addressed in the previous subsection, emphasized the importance of increasing diversity in the teaching workforce. Alternative directions to teacher accreditation tend to enroll more racially diverse populations of candidates than traditional teacher preparation programs. Forty two percent of all teacher candidates enrolled in an alternative program (entirely web-based), were individuals of color. Thirty-five percent of teacher candidates enrolled in online-university centered (hybrid) courses, were individuals of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). This data suggests that alternative, on-line routes to accreditation could be the key to increasing diversity in the education workforce.

While there may be benefits to alternative teacher certification routes, others argue that alternative methods to acquiring a teaching license are not as rigorous and do not hold graduates to the same high quality expectations as traditional campus based preparation (Lusk & Bullock, 2013). Conroy et al., (2014) believe there are three important components of education: research, theory, and practice. Yet alternative routes to certification have been criticized for requiring minimal to no clinical (practice) or student teaching requirements (AAEE, 2015; CEC, 2015; Lusk & Bullock, 2013). Clinical experience is an essential phase in preparation of effective, well prepared,

confident instructors and classroom leaders, especially those preparing to work with EBD students (Coffman & Patterson, 2014; Conroy et al., 2014; Gable et al., 2012).

Other criticisms of unconventional teacher preparation programs is that they lack the social presence that leads to networking, problem solving among cohort members, and spontaneity in discussion and collaboration. Other reported concerns and criticisms relating to on-line methods of instruction are probability of technical glitches and the lack of qualified higher education faculty to teach the courses (Robb et al., 2012). There is also evidence that teachers who have graduated from traditional campus based, professor driven programs have higher rates of retention (Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, & Murphy, 2012).

The increased existence of alternative accreditation programs is a result of issues of dissatisfaction of traditional methods, a shortage of teachers in hard-to-staff schools, and the need to increase diversity. It is important for providing institutions to adhere to the same guidelines as traditionally based routes to certification such as emphasis on pedagogy, content knowledge, evidence-based and best practices, classroom management, standards, and field experience. Alternate pathways to accreditation, perhaps, hold qualities that can be successful in recruiting teachers into the workforce, increasing diversity, and preparing highly qualified individuals for hard-to-staff positions (Conroy et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016b).

CEC's Standards for Professional Development. In the early 1980s the CEC partnered with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATC) and became the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Annually, the council reviews hundreds of teacher preparation programs each year ensuring both traditional and

alternative preparation programs demonstrate that their graduates have mastered the seven CEC performance-based preparation standards (standards and specialty sets are listed in the seventh edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Professional Ethics & Standards* listed in references (CEC, 2015). The CEC standards mirror best practice for experienced teachers but also provide a foundation of knowledge and skills (e.g., common core areas and specialty areas such as EBD).

The CEC recognizes the contemporary national shortage of qualified special education teachers. In the complicated portrait of teacher preparedness for special education and EBD students, the CEC has developed an important proposal for standards-based preparation and performance for teachers. With the validation of NCATE, this helps guarantee that CEC's special education teacher training reform goals are valuable and attainable. The CEC goal is to raise teacher training and performance through professional teamwork rather than just increasing expectations. The vision would be to incorporate insight from all levels of the education workforce (e.g. novice and veteran special educators, preparation programs faculty, and school leaders).

The advanced initiative would attempt to simultaneously develop a bundle of professional enhancement applications that address ways in which teacher competence can be achieved with expert foresight while, at the same time, improving the destructive influence of less than satisfactory environmental conditions. The structure of the program to accreditation would consist of three components: field experience and clinical practice, assessment systems, and special education content standards. The newest, revised set of CEC standards (CEC, 2015) also indicates some potential for EBD teacher training. The flexibility of the EBD specialty set reflects diversity of programs and federal settings.

The standards also allow for proof of proficiencies rather than quantity of acquired knowledge.

The CEC's improvement objective is for legislators, policymakers, and administration to operate with teachers instead of enforcing guidelines and systems that work against teachers. The purpose is to establish conditions conducive for learning, increase technology, increase the recruitment and retention of diverse personnel, increase incentives, and decrease bureaucracy. The CEC also realizes that often training programs are detached from the realities of the classroom. Therefore, the CEC suggests that all pre-service training programs should unite with schools to better prepare teachers for the realities of all federal school settings and student populations (CEC, 2015).

RtI and PBIS. Response to Intervention (RtI) in education, is an approach to academic and behavioral intervention used to provide early, systematic, and suitably concentrated support to children who are at risk for or are already underachieving when compared to grade-level standards. The purpose of RtI is to prevent academic and behavioral breakdown through collective assessment, early intervention, regular progress monitoring, and research-based instruction or reinforcements for children who struggle regularly (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely & Danielson, 2010).

One growing intervention positioned under the RtI framework is *School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* (SW-PBIS), more commonly referred to as *Positive Behavioral Interventions Supports* (PBIS). PBIS is a data powered structure for organizing progressive, preventative evidence-based practices that result in desired youth outcomes and collective organization (e.g., teaming structures, professional development supports, staff recognition), that promote sustained execution with fidelity.

Practices within PBIS are organized into a three-tiered framework including general (tier I), focus group (tier II), and intensive individualized support (tier III). Research studies have proven the effectiveness of practices within each tier of PBIS across all school settings and with all populations of students (Bal, Kozleski, Schrader, Rodriguez, & Pelton, 2014; Kelm, McIntosh, & Cooley, 2014; Lewis, Barrett, Sugai, Horner, Mitchell, & Starkey, 2016;   Simonsen & Sugai, 2013).

As mentioned above, PBIS is a continuum of supports geared to improve, create, and sustain a positive school climate for both students and staff. To increase the probability of staff implementing progressive practices with dependability across time, a PBIS team determines significant results, gathers and reviews data to make conclusions, supports implementation. PBIS provides the structure and support that results in desired youth outcomes, staff efficacy, commitment to school-wide community, and consistency (Lewis et al., 2016; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013). It is important to provide a more detailed description of the range and strength of supports each tier holds. Subsequently, the following paragraphs will briefly illustrate each stage and its contribution to SW-PBIS.

PBIS consists of three tiers of intensity. The first tier is applied school-wide and consists of rules and expectations of behavior, typically both physical and social behavior. Rules and expectations are clearly taught to all school-community members, with positive support systems embedded in the program along with a continuum of consequences and restitution for problem behaviors. The PBIS framework is dependent on the expectation that data be kept and evaluated consistently for effectiveness (Lewis et al., 2016).

Those students who are unresponsive to the first tier of PBIS, based on data, begin to receive services within a second tier. This tier generally involves about 10–15% of the school population. This level of reinforcements is not implemented school-wide but is focused on smaller groups of students with behavioral concerns. These students are considered at-risk for serious behavior problems. The objective is to be proactive rather than reactive. Wrap-around services support students at-risk for academic failure and social/emotional deterioration. Wrap-around services are organized to promote student and family success in various life domains. Support services may include home interventions, behavior plans, school counseling, therapy, personal care attendants (PCAs), respite care, social workers, county workers, tutoring, access to transportation, opportunities for English language learning, and community recreational activities. Each case is individualized, family centered, culturally relevant, and strength based. Interventions in the second tier are often attentive to student needs relating to peer relationships, low academic achievement, and challenging home environments. Again, these interventions are research and evidence-based with data kept on their effectiveness (Lewis et al., 2016).

The third tier is comprised of students with acute or chronic problem behaviors, which is typically about 5% of the school population. Students in tier three receive concentrated, individualized, research-based interventions attempting to substitute problem behaviors with desired (expected) behaviors. Tertiary (tier III) prevention is designed to center on the needs of individuals who display repeated intense problem behavior disruptive across multiple areas such as school, home and community (Lewis et al., 2016).

Research validated the effectiveness of PBIS in confronting challenging behaviors that are dangerous, vastly disruptive, and/or delay learning, resulting in social or educational segregation (Bal et al., 2014; Hirsch, Kennedy, Haines, Thomas, & Alves, 2015; Kelm et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2016; Muscott, Mann & LeBrun, 2008). The tertiary level is typically when students are referred for special education services, if they are not already receiving additional supports. Tier II and III are exceptionally relevant for special educators (e.g., EBD teachers) because of their contribution, involvement and supposed expertise in providing proactive and individualized supports. Tier III is the stage when many special educators intervene to implement intense, evidence-based approaches and interventions such as functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and behavior intervention plans (BIPs). Combined, the FBA and BIP processes have been used successfully to reduce challenging behavior while simultaneously increasing desirable behaviors in a variety of settings (Hirsch et al., 2015).

The mandate within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) for educators to manage and develop FBAs and BIPs under specific conditions has considerable importance for preservice teacher preparation (Conroy et al., 2014). Special educators are required to use evidence-based practices, such as FBAs, yet teachers admit to doubting their ability or are underprepared to use them (CEC, 2015; Conroy et al., 2014; Gable et al., 2012; Oliver & Reschly, 2010). Administration of the FBA and the implementation of the BIP are listed under CEC's specialty set for EBD teacher standards. In Lusk and Bullock's study of the perceived importance of the standards (2013), educators indicated that they considered evidence-based practices such as FBAs and BIPs to be important for behavior modification. Still, the majority of teachers did not feel prepared to conduct any evidence-based or RtI practices. These findings, imply that

special education teacher preparation is not effectively preparing future teachers to confidently perform federally authorized systems (Gable et al., 2012). Beginning with stronger grounding in the basics of FBAs, all future teachers need to establish a durable foundation in which to build upon, based on knowledge, practices and experience (Oliver & Reschly, 2010).

Research has proven that teachers who do not consider their abilities as effective and valuable, in the classroom, are susceptible to professional burnout (Boe, 2014; Cancio, 2014; Conroy et al., 2014; Haynes et al., 2014). Student behavior and academic success have been found to be directly linked to a teacher's self-efficacy (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Cancio, 2014; Cancio et al., 2013; Kindzierski, et al., 2013). Student behavior has also been shown to improve with the implementation of SW-PBIS. Many scholars recommend preparation programs concentrate more deliberately on concepts that are evidence-based, such as RtI and PBIS. The goal being to equip pre-service teachers with a plethora of behavior management skills, which educators express they are lacking (Bal et al., 2014; Hirsch et al., 2015; Kelm et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2016; Muscott, Mann & LeBrun, 2008).

PBIS contains many tools and positive evidence based practices for special educators, especially those working with students performing in the tier II and tier III levels (e.g. EBD teachers). State level accreditation policy should reflect an expectation that all pre-service teachers be provided instruction related to evidence-based classroom and behavior management (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere & MacSuga-Gage, 2014). Equally critical as preparing pre-service teachers for implementation of PBIS interventions, is the training of in-service teachers. It is important for educators already

employed in the profession to acquire specific classroom-level practices affiliated with SW-PBIS through professional development (Blanton et al., 2014, Lewis at al., 2016). Teachers outfitted with behavior management strategies, resembling those embedded in the PBIS structure, are more likely to report satisfaction, confidence, and student success both academically and behaviorally (Cancio, 2014; Conroy et al., 2014; Hill, 2011, Lewis et al., 2016), contributing to teacher satisfaction and reducing EBD teacher attrition rates (Cancio, 2014; Conroy et al., 2014).

Teacher Residency. Evolving teacher residency programs are designed to address the nation's teacher shortage. Teacher residencies present a method of recruiting and retaining high-quality educators for hard-to-staff schools and areas such as math, science, and special education (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). The following section highlights the key components and accessible opportunities offered in a residency model program.

The NEA believes that those who launch a career in teaching need to be sufficiently trained for the challenges in the classroom. The NEA and the *Learning Policy Institute* (conducts research to improve education policy and practice) consider the most reliable way to guarantee confident and qualified novice teachers requires participation in a teacher residency program. A teacher residency program is the combination of coursework and authentic field experiences. This model requires students to prove preparedness by demonstrating their subject matter, behavior management skills, and pedagogical content knowledge through a classroom-centered performance evaluation confirming the connection between theory and practice (Coffman & Patterson, 2014; Guha et al., 2016),.

Many features embedded within teacher residencies programs differ from most traditional preparation and alternative accreditation programs (Coffman & Patteson, 2014; Guhu et al., 2016) in terms of:

- Solid school district/university collaborations with a goal of meeting the requirements of the district's hiring needs;

- Extended field experience, usually a minimum of twelve months, with students benefitting from the support of a veteran, knowledgeable mentor;

- Teaching curriculum utilized and applicable in their clinical practice, establishing a more authentic and valuable training experience.

Other characteristics of high quality teacher residencies offer unique benefits. At the same time, the philosophy models cultural awareness while attempting to remedy teaching vacancies. Highlights of these programs are:

- Enrollment of teachers of color for hard-to-staff fields and locations;

- Strong content and clinical preparation specifically for the kinds of schools in which they will teach;

- Connection of new teachers to early career mentoring that will keep them in the profession;

- Offering of financial incentives for residence in exchange for a three to five year commitment.

In 2015, The National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) partnered with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to deliver the Teacher Preparation Transformation

Center Project (National Center for Teacher Residency, 2016a). The initiative's commitment is to increase effective teacher residency programs and expand evidence and research-centered practices in teacher training. The NCTR conducts research, identifies and prepares best practices for high quality internships.

NCTR examines data, research and superior quality models to apply four fundamental features of teacher preparation based on a residency design (NCTR, 2016):

1. Convert provider programming to be competency-based and clinically focused;

2. Gather and use application and impact statistics to advance syllabus/course design;

3. Increase educator and teacher-educator efficacy; and

4. Insert supports such as expert mentors to foster novice competency in their school systems.

In NCTR's 2015 *Network Impact Overview* (NCTR, 2016b) a selection of data was prepared confirming that residencies are accomplishing their objective to improve teacher preparation and guarantee teachers are ready to provide quality education in the classroom. The NCTR Network partners collected data from 12 existing residencies using evidence from student and principal perception surveys, student achievement data, and teacher performance evaluations.

According to the information gathered and presented in the summary report, responding principals testified that residency program graduates were more effective than other new teachers. Teacher evaluation data showed that they outperformed their novice

peers trained in either traditional or distance (online) programs (p. 3). Principals indicated that 74% of participating students were better prepared in classroom instruction and pedagogy, 74% were more prepared to use research-based instruction, 70% were better able to establish a positive classroom environment, and 70% demonstrated professionalism and leadership qualities (p. 3). One hundred percent of principals interviewed in high-need schools would hire another graduate from a residency program, would recommend hiring a program graduate, and would host residents in their school again (p. 2). Another impressive statistic revealed at the time of the report (2016) showed that the average retention rate for NCTR network residency program graduates was 90% after three years and 85% after five years (NCTR, 2016b).

Teacher residencies are emerging in response to teacher vacancies around the nation. Residency programs are designed especially to place teachers in hard-to-staff schools (urban, rural) and in subjects areas (math, science, special education) challenged in finding and keeping quality teachers. Evidence reflects the success of the programs (NCTR, 2016a; NCTR 2016b). Teacher residencies are guiding the demand to meet higher standards for teacher preparation accountability by creating well-prepared, highly effective new teachers that are recruited, selected, and directly in response to district needs (NCTR, 2016a). To find more detailed data and information visit NCTR's website at http://nctresidencies.org/.

Mentoring Opportunities

Novice teachers are, typically, less confident and effective than veteran ones (Cancio, 2014; Cancio et al., 2013; Billingsley et al., 2013; Hightower et al., 2011). Orientation programs can increase new teachers' knowledge and skill repertoire, shaping

effective educators faster. Research indicates that induction programs and support improve instructional values such as: fostering feelings of fulfillment, reducing emotional exhaustion, familiarizing new teachers to the district, decreasing new teacher turnover, and enhancing student learning (Cancio et al., 2013; Conroy et al., 2014; Goldrick, 2016; Guha et al., 2016; Haynes et al., 2014; Hightower et al., 2011; IRIS, 2013; Prather-Jones, 2011;).

First year teachers move through a number of developmental phases: anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection. While not every teacher goes through the exact same sequence, being aware of the phases can be a useful tool for mentors as they support novice teachers through their first year/s of teaching (Moirs, 2011). In addition, effective mentors should be knowledgeable about best practice, demonstrate excellent content knowledge, understand current education law, and be aware of contemporary trends in education (Coffman & Patterson, 2014; Conroy et al., 2014).

Mentors should also be readily available for communication, supportive listening, and coaching for typical classroom responsibilities (e.g., curriculum, paper work, assessments, parent communication, behavior management, standardized testing). Mentors should help connect their mentees with other expert personnel in the district (e.g., reading and technology specialists, special education staff, and administration). Mentors and mentees should attend professional development workshops together to allow opportunities for open discussion, collaboration and growth for both the apprentice and experienced professionals (CEC 2015; Conroy et al., 2015; Billingsley et al., 2013; Goldrick, 2016; NCTR, 2016a).

Although novice special education teachers may profit from the same type of support that their general education counterparts receive, certain aspects of their experience require additional attention (e.g., IEPs, referrals, intakes, comprehensive evaluations, FBAs, BIPs, curriculum differentiation, progress reports). Teachers of EBD students not only have the same responsibilities as other special educators, but they also can experience the most intense and stressful behaviors and situations. For this reason, EBD teachers may benefit from even more intensive peer and professional counseling, moral and emotional support, and frequent child study team meetings (Cancio, 2014; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lusk &Bullock, 2013). Also, awareness of the emotional and physical signs of stress and burnout should be brought to all educators' attention. Those that are able to indicate signs of exhaustion can be proactive in nurturing their mental and physical well-being (Cancio, 2014).

According to an analysis of the *Schools and Staffing Survey* (SASS) and the *Teacher Follow-up Survey* (mentioned on p. 21 & p. 32-34), there is a strong correlation between a teacher's first year experience and intent to stay or leave (Goldring et al., 2014). Teacher residencies have a built in mentor/mentee partnership and a network of supports for a novice teacher's entire first year in the classroom. Subsequently, in an attempt to reduce teacher attrition, it seems appropriate and beneficial for both pre-service programs and hiring schools to provide valuable mentoring under expert teachers' guided knowledge and experience (Goldrick, 2016).

Enhanced Administration Support

As often reported throughout this paper, teacher attrition remains a major issue in U.S. school districts, primarily in special education. Even more daunting are the

vacancies of qualified EBD teachers (AAEE, 2015). Recruiting and retaining qualified EBD special education teachers who can produce positive student outcomes is a growing concern. Several issues are highlighted in this paper as contributions to the attrition and retention of not only EBD teachers, but to special education in general. Potential solutions are presented to improve special education teacher retention. Yet, one remaining consideration is valuable administrative support. Past and present literature identified a direct correlation between administration support, teacher satisfaction, self-efficacy, school climate, and retention (Albrecht et al., 2009; Cancio, 2014; Cancio et al., 2013; IRIS, 2013; Prather-Jones, 2011).

Teachers of students with challenging behaviors emphasized the influence of administrative support in their decisions to leave or to remain in their positions (Albrecht et al., 2009; Cancio, 2014; Cancio et al., 2013; Caranikas-Walker, 2006; Conroy et al., et al., 2014; Prather-Jones, 2011; Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). Creating positive administrative support can sustain special educators' involvement and commitment to their work (Billingsley et al., 2013; Cancio, 2014). It is critical school administrators recognize why EBD teachers stay with their districts. Leaders should identify supports and different methods that can be implemented to support the retention of all special education teachers.

Solid executive support can act as a conduit to establishing a positive school climate. House (1981) proposed four fundamental standards to help build strong leadership characteristics: emotional support, instrumental support (tangible aid and service), informational support (advice, suggestions, and information), and appraisal support. A more recent model mirroring House's criteria for administration, was created

by the IRIS Center for Training Enhancements (2013). The IRIS Center believes a supportive leadership team cultivates effective special educators, subsequently improving the conditions of the workplace and job fulfillment. Valuable supports in the workplace and teacher efficacy have a mutual influence on each other. The model is a framework in which each contribution reinforces the other. The structure is comprised of key factors that, if distributed properly, have the potential to increase special education teacher retention. The modules consist of effective recruiting and hiring, teacher induction and mentoring, well-defined job design and expectations, continued professional learning, and work rewards for teachers (i.e., signing bonus, salary advance, moving expenses, faculty leadership roles, financial aid for relevant coursework, or degrees, bonus for teaching in high demand areas).

Other studies discussed in the *Administrative Support* section of this paper offer recommendations for district leaders in terms of recruitment and maintenance of qualified special educators and EBD teachers. The proposals resulted from the responses of special education personnel and their description of essential supports needed for job gratification and retention. Potential solutions for administrators to address critical personnel shortages include the following (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Albrecht et al., 2009; Bettini et al., 2015; Brownell et al., 2010; Cancio et al., 2013; Cancio, 2014; Coffman & Patterson, 2014; Guha et al., 2016; Guo, 2012; Hightower et al., 2011; Kelm et al., 2014; NCTR, 2016a; Prather-Jones, 2011):

- Attempt to recruit qualified minority teaching candidates;

- Provide paid leave time for paraprofessionals, those working under variances and community expert permissions, who are pursuing positions in special education through higher education;

- Provide comprehensive wages, benefits, and signing bonuses comparable to competitive districts;

- Support to complete paperwork and other mandated obligations;

- Establish clear expectations and job responsibilities;

- Provide opportunities for growth and professional development;

- Seek out additional education on disabilities and the students' needs and behaviors attached to those disabilities;

- Establish and apply school-wide positive behavior, intervention and supports (SW-PBIS) to create a sense of community, unity, clear expectations and celebrations;

- Respect, trust, allow for creativity, and acknowledge the strengths/accomplishments of all personnel

- Provide emotional and moral support, active listening and support with behavior management, FBAs and BIPs;

- Provide supports with classroom and school-wide accommodations and provide opportunities for general and special education teachers to collaborate, problem solve, and connect;

- Provide support in instances when student disciplinary action is necessary; and

- Partner with teacher residencies to create a pipeline of well-prepared, highly effective new teachers, establish communication between preparation agencies and school districts.

The existence of administrative support in schools is a defining factor for the retention of special educators and more specifically EBD teachers (Cancio et al., 2013; Caranikas-Walker et al., 2006; IRIS, 2013). Valuable administrative investment on employees has the ability to offset negative aspects of the job (Albrecht et al., 2009; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013). Replacing special education teachers and especially EBD teachers is complicated. Even more challenging is finding qualified and experienced special educators. Ultimately, administrators can conserve time, money, and safeguard student success if they provide a supportive environment by implementing the recommendations described in this section. The research suggests administrative leadership is pivotal in implementing quality special education practices. Having knowledge of and implementing specific administrative support strategies contributes to the success of the special education teacher, in turn providing a better education and experience for students.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Literature

The purpose of this thesis is to review literature and answering two guiding questions: What are the primary factors contributing to EBD teacher attrition? What are possible solutions to increase the career longevity of EBD teachers? The extensive exploration of collective past and present education laws and initiatives, empirical studies, government affiliated reports, interviews, and teacher/student advocacy networks, provided valuable answers to the two questions. The following is a summary of the information found regarding special education with a distinct emphasis on EBD teachers.

One of the most critical problems in the field of special education is developing, recruiting and sustaining a qualified workforce to teach students with emotional behavioral disorders (AAEE, 2015; Adera & Bullock, 2010; Cancio, 2014). Initiatives have been implemented both nationally, and at the state level, with an effort to reverse the overall teaching shortage (U.S Department of Education, 2011; Minnesota Department of Education, 2015). President Obama, while in office, proposed and executed several education reform projects striving to rehabilitate the nation's education system. In 2015, a bipartisan decision was made to replace the NCLB Act (2001) with the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in an effort to provide support more compatible with contemporary schools and classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2016).

With modern day classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, it is probable that without the foundation of rigorous preparatory programs, recruitment incentives, positive

school communities and supports, and effective staff development training and mentoring, teacher shortages in special education, predominantly teachers of EBD students, are predicted to increase (AAEE, 2015). The nation's attempt to remedy the problem has been largely unproductive, subsequently, costing large amounts of money. States and districts have made an effort to recruit new, often unprepared, teachers in an attempt to fill vacancies in hard-to-staff positions and to educate the most complex population of students. Yet, as research shows, the novice, amateur teachers are the most likely to abandon the job (IRIS, 2013).

The research generated extensive evidence in terms of why special education teachers, and more specifically, EBD teachers, leave the profession. The difficulties, frustration and burnout experience of teachers working with EBD students is caused by several factors. These factors include role overload (i.e., paperwork, meetings, lesson planning, parent communication, behavior management, and evaluations), adverse school climate (i.e., lack of administration support), and deficient teacher preparation. All factors were identified as being interrelated (one affecting the other) in influencing attrition and retention in all areas of special education.

Combatting the special education, and more specifically, EBD teacher shortage is complex, involving several factors all influencing one another. The following three themes emerged in the review of literature: improved teacher preparation programs, induction and mentoring opportunities, and administration support. The following paragraphs include proposals to attract and retain qualified special education teachers.

When special educators are well-trained, fully certified, and adequately prepared for their teaching positions, they are more likely to stay in the field (Aldeman et al., 2011;

Brownell et al., 2010; Conroy et al., 2014; Leko et al., 2012). It is essential for district

leaders to attract fully-qualified, prepared, and diverse special education teachers and to

address retention factors. (Cancio et al., 2013; Cancio, 2014). According to recent

research, administration has been cited as having a considerable influence on special

educators' commitment, particularly of those teaching students with EBD, to remain in

the field for the long term or to exit within the first few years (Albright et al., 2009;

Cancio et al., 2013; Caranikas et al., 2006; Prather Jones, 2011). Administration has the

ability to balance the negative effects of the burdensome workload and stress by

providing support such as induction and mentoring, professional development, assistance

with paperwork, additional prep time, parent communication, and classroom management

(IRIS, 2013; Cancio et al., 2013). Additionally, school leadership can foster a culturally

aware, student centered, and positive school-wide environment by implementing systems

such as PBIS, opportunities for personnel collaboration, and multi-cultural/equity

education training (Bal et al., 2014; Egalite et al., 2015; Kelm et al., 2014; Lewis et al.,

2016; Muscott et al., 2008), particularly important in promoting the retention of EBD

teachers.

Another crucial factor in retaining special education and EBD teachers is the

enhancement of teacher preparation programs. Several recommendations for

improvement were discovered throughout the literature review. The Center for American

Progress (Partee, 2014) and the U.S. Department of Education (2016b) recommend pre-

service training programs prepare *all* educators to respond, interact and respect today's

diverse student population while simultaneously recruiting and retaining teachers of

color. The CEC (2015) recommends that all IHE (traditional and alternative) include the

performance-based preparation standards within their program requirements to ensure all

special education graduates are prepared in their field of expertise. Although alternative routes to licensure have been criticized, some argue they are a promising route to attract racially diverse populations, full time workers, digital natives, and candidates for hard-to staff positions (Conroy et al., 2014). Another trending path to both general and special education licensure are teacher residencies. Teacher residencies attempt to recruit and retain quality teachers by modeling cultural awareness, providing extended clinical experience, cooperating with school districts, and providing mentoring opportunities for those entering the field (Guha et al., 2016).

Limitations of Study

This literature review focused on special education and EBD public school teachers in the United States, excluding international or private school teachers. As a result, this review did not examine the global perspective of EBD teachers, those who may have a different experience than public school teachers in the U.S. In addition, the exploration of literature largely focused on elementary and middle school special education teachers as a unit, and did not discriminate between the two. Consequently, the scope of research is limited to a broad perspective of elementary and middle school teachers in all different settings (Setting II, III, IV, V), even though each cluster may have differing opinions about their work experiences. Due to a lack of search results, this study is restricted to EBD and special education teacher job shortages and attrition rates, without considering other professions outside of education that may suffer the same shortages and career exodus.

Failed attempts were made to contact organizations such as AAEE, MDE, U.S. Department of Education, NCTR, and COPSSE to obtain information that was either

absent or ambiguous in published reports (i.e., demographics, percentages, concrete

evidence, and comparisons). As a result, because these organizations neglected to

respond, some valuable information is not included in this review that may have added

validation and clarity to the evidence reported. Another notable limitation is the

resignation of NEC's assistant principle, Janet Christiansen (interview on pp. 43-35), and

the failed attempts made to communicate with her regarding reasons for her leaving the

job. Although, she indicated stress in her interview, it is unclear if work related pressures

contributed to her departure.

Lastly, during the research and composition of this paper, a significant

transformation occurred within the U.S. government—Donald Trump replaced Barack

Obama as president-Betsy DeVos was appointed Secretary of Education. Thus, education

proposals and programs (listed on pp. 54-57) applied by the Obama Administration, may

not be a leading priority for the recently inaugurated (2017) executive council. Therefore,

education initiatives reported in this review do not reflect immediate or future reforms in

education.

Implications of Future Research

Minimal research was available concentrating on EBD teacher attrition in

countries other than the United States. Future research should investigate special

education (EBD) teacher satisfaction versus dissatisfaction in the U.S. compared to those

in other countries. Special education teachers in other countries may have entirely

different experiences in their work environment, which may unearth potential solutions

for retention of teachers in the U.S. Similarly, research should compare and contrast job

experiences between private and public schools to determine if teacher opinions vary based on type of school.

Most importantly, because special education consists of separate levels of restrictive environments, it would be beneficial to explore special education job experiences in each of the federal settings (II, III, IV, V). Concentrated research on this subject would be exceptionally beneficial for EBD teachers because level of setting determines federal and state funding, educational and behavioral supports, permission to administer restrictive procedures, and level of professional expertise (training/licensure). The presence or absence of one or all of these attributes may contribute to job satisfaction versus dissatisfaction in the varying special education settings.

As mentioned in the *Limitations* segment of this paper, attempted and unsuccessful contact was made with AAEE, MDE, U.S. Department of Education, NCTR, and COPSSE. Although these organizations produce valuable reports and information to the public, they should prioritize information (if applicable) such as: demographics of participants in the study, comprehensive evidence of results, and resources supportive of findings to validate research and increase clarity. Groups funded by taxpayers, such as these, should make efforts to respond to inquiries.

The transfer from a democratic to republican federal executive branch is recent (2017). Education policy agendas and proposals have been announced by President Trump's Cabinet. However, actual change has yet to officially take place. In terms of implications and reform for the future, teacher education practitioners, policymakers, and teacher education researchers should monitor and evaluate regulations such as the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (reauthorization of No Child Left Behind) that returns much of the

decision-making power over education policy back to states. Research should concentrate on whether or not the initiatives Obama implemented (pp. 54-57) remain applicable for future progression in education, while simultaneously evaluating President Trump's educational plans for education restructure.

Professional Application

At the time I began this literature review, I noticed a decline in my enthusiasm for teaching EBD students. I enjoyed teaching the same population of students (setting IV, EBD/DCD, elementary students) for 17 years, yet the previous two years seemed particularly stressful and school morale was dwindling. Colleagues of mine were feeling the same disappointment. Unfortunately, many expert, veteran teachers were either, retiring early or migrating to other school districts. At the time, our highly respected and dedicated principal also resigned. Consequently, teachers were replaced with licensed elementary or secondary novice teachers (with no EBD certification/experience) or individuals issued provisional Community Experts status. These circumstances were the motivation for the guiding questions of this paper. The following paragraphs describe how I will use the information gathered in this review of literature to support both novice and veteran teachers while simultaneously attempting to reestablish school spirit.

In the 2016-2017 school year I approached administration with a proposal to facilitate a voluntary, introductory training during fall workshop week. The goal of the training is to educate staff on how to identify and recognize signs of stress and burnout. One of the leading Social/Emotional Learning professionals on site and I are collaborating to prepare a brief presentation (illustrating stress and its relation to burnout), a pamphlet, and a checklist (catalogue of physical and emotional signs of

stress) for distribution. The purpose is to provide sustainable, everyday methods and supports to reduce stress and overload, with expectations to increase job satisfaction. Many factors contribute to personal and professional tension. Recognizing and understanding personal tolerance of stress may be initial stages in reducing burnout and attrition.

I have been asked to take on the responsibility as a mentor lead for the 2017-2018 school year. I will advocate that each mentor, at maximum, be assigned two mentees. In previous years, mentors have been responsible for up to five mentees reducing, effectiveness, time, and availability to the assignment. In theory and in alliance with other mentor leads, we will hold an initial meeting to review responsibilities of each member of the group. Effective mentoring should not only improve the quality of teaching, but also encourage new teachers to remain in the field. As mentor lead, I will foster a successful mentor/mentee partnership by implementing and committing to the following objectives:

- Ensure experienced mentors are partnered with mentees with similar job roles and responsibilities.

- Document personal and professional learning and goals through discussion, observation and reflection.

- Connect mentee with essential people and resources to acquire information, develop skills, and connect with a network of supports.

- Encourage and demonstrate ways to communicate and create positive relationships with families and community members.

- Provide resources for enhanced cultural awareness to increase understanding of ethnic values, beliefs and perceptions.

- Setup a network of communication with payroll, human resources, office personnel, administration, specialty staff, due process facilitator, technical support, nurse, custodians, and other relevant staff.

- Create relevant and continuous opportunities for professional development.

- Provide allotted time for mentor/mentee connection and discussion.

- Weekly or bi-weekly, due process direct instruction, classroom and behavior management tips, emergency protocol, and state testing tutorials.

- Advocate for reasonable mentor compensation for time and dedication.

Mentoring has a positive correlation to retention. My objective as a mentor lead is to increase competence and skills, improve job satisfaction, reduce stress and burnout, and increasing retention of beginning EBD teachers.

Conclusion

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:13

As I reflect on 17 years as an EBD teacher, I often wonder how and why I stay in a profession that many others have abandoned. I have wanted to surrender. I have questioned God, countless times, asking if my mission lies in a profession that is often thankless, emotionally and physically exhausting, with minimal compensation. Overwhelming workload responsibilities are accompanied by student behaviors such as:

threats, vulgar language, bites, bruises, spit, hair pulling, and property destruction. On many occasions, I have taken a *"time- out"* and sobbed in the bathroom. Yet, something gives me motivation and an eagerness to return to the classroom each day. I have come to realize my inspiration and internal strength comes from one entity—God.

While attending Catholic leadership camp as a child, a priest shared a story that, for me, has been a guiding presence and vision throughout my professional journey. The following tale inspires me to make a difference in lives each day, particularly for those others have given up on.

The Star Thrower

"Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young man paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, "It made a difference for that one." ― *Loren Eiseley*

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