

Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Inclusive Settings  
A Meta-Synthesis

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## **1. Introduction**

### *1.1. Background*

Looking at students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD) through the general educator's eyes is often overwhelming and frustrating. Some of the behaviors that accompany students with E/BD are anti-social and pervasive to the general education setting. The category of E/BD is defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) as:

- (A) An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
- (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers;
- (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
- (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
- (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (IDEA, 2004)

There are several strategies suggested throughout the literature on E/BD that can be implemented to minimize the general educators' feelings of frustration. According to Smith, Polloway, Patton, and Dowdy (2008), there are three tactics that teachers can adopt to assist the student with E/BD in a general education classroom:

1. Using programs in which peers act as buddies or tutors;
2. Focusing on positive behaviors and providing appropriate reinforcements; and
3. Using good-behavior games in which all students work together to earn rewards.

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These tactics may enable students with E/BD to succeed by creating an increasingly positive classroom environment and a diminishing negative classroom environment. In addition to these tactics for inclusive success for students with E/BD, the authors postulate that the general classroom teachers have the primary responsibility for creating the most successful environment for students with E/BD (Smith et. al., 2008).

This opinion may seem idealistic when simply read out of a textbook. The reality of the social implications of E/BD students is seen clearly in the general education classroom setting. Often times, when students with E/BD become part of a regular classroom setting the teaching and learning can become difficult, especially if the student externalizes behaviors versus internalizes behaviors (quiet and depressed). Considering the definition IDEA gives to students with E/BD, it is easy to see how the student with E/BD who externalizes behaviors may present challenges to a general education classroom where the teacher is not prepared to implement effective accommodations. Some of these challenges include; teaching becomes difficult for the teacher, learning becomes difficult for the other students, and perhaps the most basic goal of the student with E/BD, persevering in the inclusive setting, becomes difficult.

Historically these challenges were minimal for teachers, due to having the option of placing students with E/BD in self-contained programs outside of a general education classroom. More recently, the idea of inclusion (placing these students back into the general education classroom) is becoming more popular. The idea of inclusion stems from several philosophies outlined in the literature on E/BD. Perhaps the most important is equal opportunity, which is exposure to same aged non-disabled peers and access to the general education curriculum.

### *1.2. Experiences and beliefs*

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My experiences and beliefs revolve around working with students with E/BD (among other students with disabilities) predominately in a special education setting with additional time integrating them in a general education setting. Prior to trying to integrate students with E/BD into a general education setting, I worked with students with E/BD who attended an elementary school specifically designed for severe behavioral problems, School X. Students were in a very restricted environment consisting of one classroom with a teacher, two paraprofessionals, and an intervention coach. This restrictive environment was very structured and regimented. When students' behaviors improved, they were given an opportunity to return to a general education school with a program for E/BD students (School Y). Now, in our general education setting, the students are in a less restrictive environment, which includes following the schedule of the other students in their respective grade levels (going to class, pullouts, lunch, recess, field trips, assemblies, etc). The ultimate goal is for the student to learn independently in a general education classroom at their neighborhood school (School Z). Essentially, our program at School Y is a bridge between the very restrictive environment of School X and the general education setting of School Z.

Our program is called the School Based Behavior Support (SBBS) program, the first of its kind in our School District. With this pilot program comes uncertainty by each party involved; teachers, principals, counselors, and nurses. Also, those outside of the school show different levels of support and interests for the SBBS program. There are both feelings of fear and excitement expressed at the idea of this new program. Initially, most school personnel are curious, at the very least, to better understand our program. It is at this point where teachers may

be motivated to obtain additional training and learn strategies to include students with E/BD into a general education classroom.

Because our students are transferring from a school specifically designed for severe behavioral problems, they are often surrounded by many negative stereotypes. Stereotypes such as “bad kids” or “dangerous kids” are phrases often heard about students who have attended School X, the very restrictive school. It is in this light that our students have a strike against them before even stepping foot in a general education classroom at School Y. This may be due to several factors; lack of education about our program, lack of training, lack of experience, lack of confidence, and thoughts of being unprepared, which all cause insecurity and fear.

These factors and stereotypes can be a source of frustration for paraeducators in the SBBS program at School Y. Since these students in transition have already been labeled as “behavior problems” simply through attending School X, many teachers and staff have prematurely formed negative opinions. Due to this stereotyping, these students experience yet another hurdle that they must overcome in their already burdensome lives.

Conversely, there are teachers and school administrators who view our students in a positive and optimistic light. It is this mentality which I would like to see begin taking shape in our schools; a mentality that accepts students that have challenging behaviors with the same level of eagerness and promising consideration as students with more appropriate behaviors.

In my experience working with students with E/BD, I have come to know many of their struggles and strengths, including many of the obstacles they have to overcome in life and in school. Although we have minimal influence over these students in their home and personal

lives, we can have an enormous effect on them while at school. In order for this effect to be positive, there are certain questions that need answering:

1. What are the general education teacher's views on students with E/BD?
2. What level of inclusive acceptance in a general education school setting can we expect from teachers?
3. How do teacher's positive perceptions of students with E/BD impact how well they can include students with challenging behaviors in a general education setting?
4. How can we increase the amount of time that a student with E/BD spends in the regular education classroom? Will the amount of time spent in an inclusive setting be related to teacher perceptions?

### *1.3. Purpose of this metasynthesis*

I can see how this topic is a touchy subject with many teachers and administrators. It is one that is rarely openly discussed in our schools. It is my hope, interest, and first purpose of this metasynthesis to bring these unspoken fears and frustrations concerning the placement and inclusiveness of students with E/BD to a positive, approachable light. In the unraveling of such a difficult topic, my second purpose is to create a way to have open and objective conversations regarding where the students of school X and others like it can get the best inclusive education. My third purpose is to continue that conversation in regards to how we, as teachers, paraeducators, principals, and others, can help provide the best inclusive education for these students. My final purpose is to find out how we can provide a more inclusive education for those students with E/BD who are currently termed "too dangerous" for the regular education classroom setting.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1. Selection criteria*

The 32 journal articles included in this meta-synthesis met the following selection criteria:

1. The articles explore issues surrounding emotional and behavioral disorders in k-6 school settings.
2. The articles were all published in journals related to the field of education.
3. The articles were published between 1999 and 2009.
4. The articles were peer reviewed.

### *2.2. Search procedures*

I conducted database searches and ancestral searches to locate articles and chapters for this meta-synthesis.

#### *2.2.1. Database searches*

I conducted Boolean searches within the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC, Ebscohost) using these specific search terms:

1. ("Emotional Disturbances") AND ("Inclusion")
2. ("Behavior Disorders") AND ("Inclusion")

These database searches yielded a total of 30 articles (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2004; Burton, Bartlett, & de Cuevas, 2009; Cagran & Schmidt, 2007; Conroy, Dunlap, Clarke, & Alter, 2005; Cooper, 2008; Danforth & Morris, 2006; Dempsey, 2007; Dworet & Maich, 2007; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010; Gandhi, 2007; Heath, McLean-Heywood, Rousseau, Petrakos, Finn, & Karagiannakis, 2006; Jull, 2009; Kearney, & Kane, 2006; Kehle, Bray, Theodore,

Zhou, & McCoach, 2004; Kern, Hilt, & Gresham, 2004; Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004; Lindsay & Beail, 2004; Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011; Mowat, 2010; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Nickerson, Brosf, & Shapiro, 2004; Oluwole, 2009; Pierce, Reid, & Epstein, 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Riddell, 2009; Simpson, 2004; Soan, 2006; Stichter, Janine, Sasso, Jolivette, & Carr, 2004; Wilkinson, 2005; Zindler, 2009).

### 2.2.2. *Ancestral searches*

An ancestral search involves reviewing the reference lists of previously published works to locate literature relevant to one's topic of interest (Welch, Brownell, & Sheridan, 1999). I found two articles through ancestral searches based on the reference lists of the articles used from my database findings. These articles met the database selection criteria. (Abrams, 2005; Carter, Lane, Crnabori, Bruhn, & Oakes, 2011).

### 2.3 *Coding procedures*

I used a coding form to categorize the information presented in each of the 32 articles. This coding form was based on: (a) publication type; (b) research design; (c) participants; (d) data sources; and (e) findings of the studies.

#### 2.3.1. *Publication type*

I categorized each article according to its publication type (e.g. research study, theoretical work, descriptive work, opinion piece, guide, annotated bibliography, or review of literature). *Research studies* follow pre-determined guidelines to obtain and/or utilize quantitative and/or qualitative data. *Theoretical works* use existing research literature to support, criticize, or fine-tune theoretical concepts and/or philosophical perspectives. *Descriptive works* provide the details of experiences without using pre-determined guidelines or systems of analysis. An

*opinion piece/position paper* takes an opinion-based stance in order to provide support for an author's topic. A *guide* provides the strategies needed to implement tools (e.g., assessments, programs, or policies) that practitioners use in their work and/or research. *Annotated bibliographies* are lists of articles or books listed in alphabetical order and provide an explanatory or preparatory abstract about the topic they cover. Lastly, *reviews of literature* provide a general synthesis of literature that is based on a specific topic. A *review* of literature also helps to highlight critical points found in a selection of articles.

### 2.3.2. *Research design*

I identified each study according to its research design (i.e., quantitative research, qualitative research, mixed methods research). When conducting a *quantitative* study, research is focused on collecting and analyzing numerical data. When following the *qualitative* research design, researchers use language (e.g., interviews) to collect and represent non-numerical data. It is also possible that a research design could include both methods (quantitative and qualitative) to help find information needed for a study; studies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods use a mixed methods design (Table 2).

### 2.3.3 *Participants, data sources, and findings*

All participants were identified in each of the studies. Additionally, the data sources used were identified for each study. Lastly, all findings were summarized according to each individual research study (Table 2).

## 2.4 *Data analysis*

I used a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method previously employed by Duke (2011) and Duke and Ward (2009) to analyze the 32 articles that I included in this meta-synthesis.

### *3.1 Publication type*

I located 32 articles that met my selection criteria. The publication type of each article is identified in Table 1. Twelve of the 32 articles (37.5%) included in this meta-synthesis were research studies (Burton et al., 2009; Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Gal et al., 2010; Gandhi, 2007; Lifshitz et al., 2004; Litvack et al., 2011; Mowat, 2010; Nickerson et al., 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Stichter et al., 2004; Wilkinson, 2005; Zindler, 2009). Eight of the articles (25%) were descriptive articles (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011; Conroy et al., 2005; Cooper, 2008; Dempsy, 2007; Jull, 2009; Oluwole, 2009; Simpson, 2004; Soan, 2006). One of the articles (3.1%) was a guide (Abrams, 2005). One of the articles (3.1%) was an opinion piece/position paper (Heath et al., 2006).

**Table 1**

<b>Author(s) &amp; Year of Publication</b>	<b>Publication Type</b>
Abrams, 2005	Guide
Anastasiou & Kauffman 2011	Descriptive Article
Burton, Bartlett, & de Cuevas, 2009	Research Study
Cagran & Schmidt, 2011	Research Study
Carter, Lane, Crnabori, Bruhn, & Oakes, 2011	Research Study
Conroy, Dunlap, Clarke, & Alter, 2005	Descriptive Article
Cooper, 2008	Descriptive Article
Dansforth, & Morris, 2006	Research Study
Dempsy, 2007	Descriptive Article
Dworet & Maich, 2007	Research Study

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Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010	Research Study
Gandhi, 2007	Research Study
Heath, McLean-Heywood, Rousseau, Petrakos, Finn, & Karagiannakis, 2006	Opinion Piece
Jull, 2009	Descriptive Article
Kearney & Kane, 2006	Research Study
Kehle, Bray, Theodore, Zhou, & McCoach, 2005	Research Study
Kern, Hilt, & Gresham, 2004	Research Study
Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004	Research Study
Lindsay & Beail, 2004	Research Study
Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011	Research Study
Mowat, 2010	Research Study
Munn & Lloyd, 2005	Research Study
Nickerson, Brosorf, & Shapiro, 2004	Research Study
Oluwole, 2009	Descriptive Article
Pierce, Reid, & Epstein, 2004	Research Study
Reschly & Christenson, 2006	Research Study
Riddell, 2009	Research Study
Simpson, 2004	Descriptive Article
Soan, 2006	Descriptive Article
Stichter, Sasso, Jolivette, & Carr, 2004	Research Study
Wilkinson, 2005	Research Study
Zindler, 2009	Research Study

*3.2. Research design, participants, data sources, and findings of the studies*

As previously noted, 12 research studies met my selection criteria (Burton et al., 2009; Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Gal et al., 2010; Gandhi, 2007; Lifshitz et al., 2004; Litvack et al., 2011; Mowat, 2010; Nickerson et al., 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Stichter et al., 2004; Wilkinson, 2005; Zindler, 2009) The research design, participants, data sources, and findings of each study are identified in Table 2.

**Table 2**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Burton, Bartlett, & de Cuevas, 2009	Qualitative	Practitioners, Secondary general education teachers, behavior support teacher and pastoral staff.	Unstructured Interviews, analysis of local authority and school policy documents and provision	The findings of this study provide insight into the problem of misplaced priorities in schools overshadowing disadvantaged pupils who have E/BD and other disabilities. The authors show that it is unclear to what extent the government is lending political support to addressing the needs of this vulnerable group, while its initiatives are arguably undermined by a culture of performance and

				competition.
Cagran & Schmidt, 2011	Quantitative	Regular education teachers from grades 1-8	<i>The Impact of Inclusion Questionnaire (IIQ).</i>	The results show that teachers attitudes towards inclusion are determined by the type of special needs the integrated pupils have. Students with physical impairments were viewed with favor and students with emotional/behavioral disorders had the lowest levels of teacher's consent. The study also focuses on the levels of teacher's expertise and correlation to the level of agreement with inclusion. Teachers with more training had a higher tolerance for inclusion of students with special needs.
Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010	Qualitative	53 preschool Teachers	Demographic questionnaires, <i>The Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale, The Environmental Accommodations of Schools</i> research tool.	This study identified child, teacher, and environmental barriers to inclusion namely teacher's attitudes to inclusion of children with disabilities in their classes. Barriers to inclusion found were lack of indirect support for the teacher by the school and the general education system. The 'required

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				supports' include more professional training, reduction of workload, increased assistance, and decrease in ratio of adults per children in the classroom.
Gandhi, 2007	Mixed methods	3rd grade students without disabilities	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (3 <sup>rd</sup> grade class of 1998-99)	This study shows both positive and negative correlations between inclusive classrooms and reading achievement of students without disabilities. Positive correlations are observed when the student with E/BD has an aide to guide them through the classwork. Conversely, non-disabled students reading achievement goes down when the student with E/BD does not have an aide to assist them in their work.
Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004	Mixed Methods	158 Israeli and Palestinian female elementary school teachers	Regular Education Initiative Questionnaire	This study found that Israeli and Palestinian regular and special education teachers had different takes on the inclusion of special education students of different sort. Palestinian regular and special education teachers are more conservative in that they were more

				inclined to denying special education students to an inclusive setting. Whereas, Israeli teachers were more open to the idea. When the authors implemented their intervention program to promote inclusion for all students, both sets of teachers' sense of efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion increased.
Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011	Mixed Methods	234 elementary school students (26 who had a disability)	Teacher Information Questionnaire, Supplemental Enrichment and Acceleration History Interview, Student Participant Interview, Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale-Form	This study showed that average-achieving elementary students expressed more positive attitudes toward students with intellectual impairments than learning, behavioral, or severe developmental disorders. The latter of these students with disabilities were viewed as an obstacle to the average-achieving student's learning.
Mowat, 2010	Mixed Methods	Secondary students with social and emotional behavioural difficulties	Interviews	This study looks at inclusion from an individualized approach taking each students unique needs into consideration through the use of the intervention called Support Group

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				Initiatives.
Nickerson, Brosof, & Shapiro, 2004	Quantitative	84 secondary students with E/BD	Scales for Predicting Successful Inclusion, Conner's Teachers Rating Scales, Adjustment Scales for Children and Adolescents, The Devereux Behavior Rating Scale-School Form, The Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale	This study sought out variables that predicted positive inclusion outcomes for students with emotional disturbance. Although students with E/D exhibited improved peer relationships and emotional maturity, scores indicated that the students with ED were unlikely to experience success in less restrictive educational settings. One solution the authors propose is that with proper intensive training of school personnel, consultative support, and specific interventions.
Reschly & Christenson, 2006	Quantitative	1064 students with LD, 338 students with E/BD, and 96 students with LD and E/BD (all students were in secondary settings)	Interviews, standardized tests, and surveys	This study found that when comparing the engagement of students with LD or E/BD and average-achieving peers significant differences were present and indicated that students with LD or E/BD reported less desirable engagement than their average-achieving peers. This lowered level of engagement

				resulted higher dropout rates for students with E/BD and LD.
Stichter, Sasso, Jolivette, & Carr, 2004	Quantitative	A 7-year-old boy with E/BD and a 7.5 year old boy that did not have a disability. One regular education teacher and one special education teacher. 24 regular education students.	Observation (via videotape)	This study sought to identify the most salient antecedent variables related to problem behavior through the use of a structural analysis procedure. By looking at 9 different variables across 4 separate phases in one calendar school year, the authors found that the antecedents that promoted a successful inclusion experience for the boy with E/D were high structure, low social, high noise, with close teacher proximity.
Wilkinson, 2005	Mixed Methods	2 fourth grade students with E/BD, their parents and teachers	Interviews, document analysis, and observations	This study used the conjoint behavioral consultation, which provides parents and teachers with a collaborative effort to meet the academic, social, and behavioral needs of children. Results indicated a significant increase in teacher ratings of behavioral control from baseline to treatment. Positive treatment results were verified at a four-week follow up

				and both teachers and parents indicated satisfaction with the consultation services.
Zindler, 2009	Qualitative	24 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade students in a New York City inclusive classroom. Seven of the students were special education students. 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade teacher.	Interviews, sociograms, observations	This study looks at academic and social needs of students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. The authors found that in order to provide the student with a positive inclusive experience, more time is needed for training in order to know how to meet accommodations and modifications and to differentiate the regular ed curriculum accordingly. The findings of this study also point to the need for a smaller class size in order for the workload of the teacher to be smaller and more manageable with the extra responsibilities that come with an inclusive setting.

### *3.2.1. Research design*

Three of the 12 studies (25%) included in this meta-synthesis employed a qualitative research design (Burton, Bartlett, & de Cuevas, 2009; Gal et al., 2010; Zindler, 2009). 4 of the 12 studies (33.33%) used a quantitative research design (Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Nickerson et al., 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Stichter et al., 2004). 5 of the 12 studies (41.66%) employed a mixed methods research design, collecting and analyzing a combination of both quantitative (i.e., numerical) and qualitative (i.e., non-numerical) data (Gandhi, 2007; Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004; Litvack et al., 2011; Mowat, 2010; Wilkinson, 2005).

### *3.2.2 Participants and data sources*

The participants included in these 12 research articles included in this meta-synthesis are elementary school and high school regular education students and students with disabilities. Also included in the meta-synthesis were elementary and high school regular education and special education teachers. There were 5 research articles that included elementary school regular and special education teachers (Zindler, 2009; Wilkinson, 2005; Stichter, Sasso, Jolivet, & Carr, 2004; Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010; Cagran & Schmidt, 2011;). There was one article that included secondary education regular education teachers (Burton, Bartlett, & de Cuevas, 2009). Four research articles included elementary school students with and without disabilities (Zindler, 2009; Wilkinson, 2005; Stichter, Sasso, Jolivet, & Carr, 2004; Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011;). There were three research articles that included secondary school students (Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Nickerson, Brosf, & Shapiro, 2004; Mowat, 2010;). In addition to these participants, other participants were included to collect data. Other participants included parents of students with and without disabilities, elementary school and secondary administrators, and related service providers.

Interviews, questionnaires, data base analysis, and observations provided the main source of data collection. Out of the 12 research articles, 5 gathered data using interviews (Burton, Bartlett, & de Cuevas, 2009; Mowat, 2010; Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Wilkinson, 2005; Zindler, 2009). Four of the articles gathered data using questionnaires (Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010; Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004; Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011;). Data base analysis was utilized to collect data for two of the articles (Gandhi, 2007; Nickerson, Brosf, & Shapiro, 2004;). One article used observations to collect data

(Stichter, Sasso, Jolivet, & Carr, 2004). Other forms of data collection included in the research studies included student file analysis and transition planning inventories.

### 3.2.3 *Findings of the Study*

The findings of the 12 research articles included in this meta-synthesis can be summarized as follows.

1. Students with E/BD often experience a sort of trauma in the inclusive setting through a sense of alienation from their peers and the overall school environment. Development of student autonomy, positive peer interactions, work habits, and stimulating academics are a few of the areas where students with E/BD need the most support. By gaining a stronger sense of the E/BD student's needs, abilities, and potential, teachers will increase their knowledge of positive antecedents needed to develop expected behaviors and thereby extinguish unnecessary trauma for all parties involved.

2. Students with E/BD are not usually enthusiastically welcomed into an inclusive setting by the general education teacher. Teachers show frustration because of a lack of training and inadequate support from administration, special education teachers, and parents. When given proper support, general education teachers who provide inclusion to students with E/BD feel more confident and successful in their work.

3. Successful inclusion of students with E/BD reaches beyond the classroom to parents, related service personnel, and administrators. School-wide continuity and ongoing professional collaboration is needed to effectively implement evidence-based inclusive practices. Trainings and professional consultations are needed for all school staff and faculty in order to draw on and

increase existing knowledge concerning how best to include students in the general education setting.

### *3.3 Emergent themes*

Five themes emerged from my analysis of the thirty-six articles included in this meta-synthesis. These emergent themes, or theme clusters, include: (a) Teacher and student frustration due to stereotyping in inclusive settings; (b) Quality of support in inclusive settings; (c) the culture of schools and school policies concerning students with E/BD in inclusive settings; (d) the quality of support for pupils with E/BD; (e) degree of knowledge, understanding, and expertise of general education teachers working with students with E/BD in an inclusive setting. These five theme clusters and their formulated meanings are represented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

<b>Theme Clusters</b>	<b>Formulated Meanings</b>
<b>Teacher's and students frustrations due to stereotyping in inclusive settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students with E/BD begin their educational experience with three strikes against them by not having the behaviors and attitudes necessary for inclusive purposes. If these setbacks are not corrected, school will increasingly become an unstable place for them to go and be successful.</li> <li>● High achieving students saw students with E/BD as an inconvenience and hindrance to their learning because the teacher</li> </ul>

	<p>had to slow down lessons or interrupt them altogether for their need for a slower pace and their frequent inappropriate classroom behaviors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Average achieving children were not likely to complain that students with E/BD slowed the class down or that there was any problem with the interruptions they may cause.</li> <li>● When considering working with students with disabilities, teachers expressed lower levels of interest and acceptance toward working with students with E/BD vs. working with students with physical disabilities.</li> <li>● Students with E/BD cause other students in an inclusive setting to be more distracted and therefore are considered more of a hindrance to the learning successes of others than students with physical impairments.</li> <li>● Perceptions of inclusion are related to the desired outcomes of the child, the rights of the child, and the characteristics of an inclusive school.</li> <li>● The benefits of educating students with E/BD are well documented, however, parents of non-disabled students remain skeptical due to the frequent academic disruptions that the inclusive classroom might create.</li> <li>● Many studies have shown large disparities between whether inclusion of students with E/BD has negative, positive, or neutral affects on the academic performance of non-disabled students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quality of support in inclusive settings</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teachers who work with students with E/BD in an inclusive setting require an increase in training, consultative support, and effective interventions.</li> <li>● Three keys to a successful inclusive setting for students with E/BD involves a strong collaborative effort between teacher and parent, effective consultative support, and the use of evidence-based interventions with high levels of acceptability.</li> <li>● Each student who comes into an inclusive setting has unique needs that require specialized curricular and educational adaptations.</li> <li>● Experience and expertise prove to be strong tools in implementing curriculum effectively with students who have E/BD.</li> <li>● Working conditions impact teachers' perceptions of inclusive settings and how effective they are.</li> <li>● Less working hours and lower child-to-teacher ratios are concerns for teachers who work with students with E/BD in an inclusive setting.</li> <li>● The reason teachers give for avoiding the inclusion of students with E/BD is relative to the increased attention they require in responding to their inappropriate and negative behaviors.</li> <li>● The ongoing implementation of inclusion shows increases in teacher professionalism and encourages and (perhaps) demands</li> </ul>

<p><b>The culture of schools and school policies concerning students with E/BD in an inclusive setting</b></p>	<p>ongoing reflection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Family and amount of income plays a role in the outcome of students with E/BD in an educational setting.</li> <li>● Educators, students, and environment all serve as change agents in promoting a positive or negative experience for students with E/BD in an inclusive setting.</li> <li>● Considering, predicting, and manipulating aspects of a student with E/BD's educational environment and curricular placement such as time of day, subject matter, noise level, social factors, level of structure, and teacher availability are all important when considering transitioning the student into an inclusive setting.</li> <li>● Cultural aspects impact teacher's attitudes toward students with E/BD as well.</li> <li>● Teachers who come from an individualistic society are less interested in including students with E/BD and people who come from a collectivist society are more inclined to include students with E/BD and other disabilities.</li> <li>● Inclusion takes into consideration the benefits of the student, the school, and the community at large.</li> <li>● Schools often vary a great deal from their school-wide behavior plans and treated students with and without E/BD with varying degrees of respect and understanding.</li> <li>● There are no solid or legal definitions on what inclusion means. Some say inclusion should be full-time others say it can be part time. Some say inclusion should be limited to some students with disabilities and others say it should be open to any and all students with disabilities.</li> <li>● Each school has its own uniqueness that plays a big part in deciding which philosophy to implement concerning the inclusion of students with E/BD.</li> <li>● The social aspects of a school are an important part of continued success in students with E/BD proceeding throughout the expected educational sequence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The quality of support for pupils with E/BD in an inclusive setting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student autonomy plays an important role in the outcome of students with E/BD. Giving the student a choice in the way an intervention is set up increases the likelihood that the intervention will be successful.</li> <li>● Self-management interventions can be effective when working with students with E/BD in an inclusive setting.</li> <li>● Including peers as mediators in the general classroom setting has proven helpful in encouraging pro-social behavior for students with E/BD.</li> <li>● Giving students with E/BD a free and unconstrained will to interact with their peers without adult interjection provides an opportunity for natural social consequences and benefits that help mold how</li> </ul>

	<p>that student views themselves in an inclusive setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work habits, positive relationships, and strong coping skills are all indicators of students who are more successful in inclusive settings.</li> <li>● Students who were asked what would make their educational experience more encouraging to stay in school said they would like more individual help, rules and class changes, changes in teacher's attitudes, an increase in autonomy, and better treatment.</li> <li>● Internal engagement (autonomy) is a difficult aspect to gauge when making connections to a student's success in an inclusive setting. Whereas, external engagements such as behaviors and academics are very observable and often times predictable.</li> <li>● Creating opportunities for interpersonal connections between students and teachers, and students and students promote increased student engagement in their school environments and their desire to learn.</li> <li>● Inclusion needs to be functionally and socially appropriate for students with E/BD.</li> <li>● A successful inclusive experience requires an in-depth look at the student's needs, potential, abilities, and talents.</li> <li>● Students with E/BD often experience widespread underachievement due to inadequate provisions, difficulties with reintegration, being prevented from accessing the general education curriculum, and being excluded from mainstream education for extended periods.</li> <li>● The key question and challenge that must be asked in order for the inclusion of students with EB E/BD D to be successful is, "how can inclusion benefit all?"</li> <li>● Antecedents play an important role in students with E/BD's behavioral outcomes while in an inclusive setting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Degree of knowledge, understanding, and expertise of general education teacher in an inclusive setting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A prerequisite to considering inclusion is understanding that students with E/BD have both externalizing and internalizing predictive skills, strengths, and weaknesses that can affect their inclusive settings.</li> <li>● When a student's disability manifests itself internally, then the lack of an observable external factor or factors makes it more difficult for teachers to think there is any need for extra modifications or accommodations.</li> <li>● Teacher's initial negative or apprehensive reactions to working with students with E/BD became increasingly more positive due to an increase in their confidence in how to successfully include them.</li> <li>● The more training teachers had in working with students with E/BD in an inclusive setting the more confidence they had and willingness to embrace working with that population of students by focusing on the positive, rather than the negative, aspects of having them in their class.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providing appropriate training is key to promoting positive attitudes in teachers who work with students with E/BD.</li> <li>● Although E/BD -based professional trainings help increase positive attitudes towards inclusion, overall attitudes and willingness to work with this population remains negative and low.</li> <li>● Helping the student with E/BD cope with the demands of school life (e.g. social implications) is the main focus in combating frequent classroom disruption.</li> <li>● Without proper training and collaboration, teachers will be unprepared to help students with E/BD feel like part of the classroom and be successful. The result of this leads to more negative behaviors that result in a stronger sense of alienation for the student from their peers and teachers. This lack of support for teachers will also leave them feeling overwhelmed and hopeless, which eventually leads to distancing them further from the student and his or her needs.</li> <li>● Identifying the most important or crucial antecedents or triggers to unexpected classroom behaviors that a student with an emotional and behavioral disorder has are subjective due to the many external factors that contribute to how the student interacts in the classroom. Not knowing what factors to focus on is often parallel to not having the necessary evidence based interventions to use and leaves the teacher with few options.</li> <li>● Specialized training for teachers (or lack thereof) is the pivotal element in how successful an inclusive setting will be. The more training teachers have, the deeper their repertoire of interventions will be to draw from in those critical moments of working with students with EBD.</li> </ul>
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#### 4. Discussion

In this section I have summarized the emergent themes from my analysis of the 36 articles included in this meta-synthesis. These emergent themes were then connected to my own practices as a special education teacher.

##### *4.1 Teacher's and students' frustrations due to stereotyping in inclusive settings*

Teachers, parents, and students without disabilities have preconceived expectations of how students with E/BD will interact in an inclusive setting. Ideas such as, "students with E/BD are trouble makers" or "students with E/BD take away from others' learning" often lead to harmful stereotypes of students with E/BD and create inequitable educational environments. These misconceptions often undermine inclusion attempts for many students who have great potential. Ridding the classroom of stereotypes begins by providing education for those who would be in contact with a student with E/BD in an inclusive setting. Educating the teachers, parents, and non-disabled students about how they can create the best inclusive environment possible would go far in combating intended stereotypes and benefit all parties involved.

Because of these corrosive stereotypes, general education teachers are apprehensive about including students with E/BD in the general education classroom setting. Simply initiating a conversation with the student who is being included, their parent, or the student's prior teachers can quickly calm these initial fears of the general education classroom. In 30 minutes time, the future teacher of a student with E/BD can learn multiple aspects of that child's life. This will allow the teacher to make critical decisions and successfully include students with E/BD in their classroom, as well as putting to rest many prior ill-conceived stereotypes. Additionally, other students in the classroom and the school at large will more likely make educated decisions on how best to interact with these students, thereby creating the necessary atmosphere conducive to successful inclusion.

#### *4.2 Quality of support in inclusive settings*

Teachers are being bombarded with new federal and state regulations that stress increased curriculum and benchmark standards. This results in less time spent on actual student engagement and more time on paperwork, meetings, and increased stress levels. Additionally, budget cuts are increasing the student-teacher ratio. Adding inclusion to the ever increasing demands on teachers creates yet another hurdle. Due to an overall lack of interest supporting the inclusion of students with E/BD, along with these ever-increasing demands put on teachers, successful inclusion is setup to fail before it even begins. It is not so much that teachers have a low willingness to accept students with E/BD because of the challenge they may present, rather, it is a flawed system that sets unreachable standards for teachers without providing the proper supports.

A good starting point to fixing some of these systemic issues would be to increase school budgets to provide the resources needed in order to effectively meet increased demands. Basic resources needed are more teaching positions, increased consultative support and training opportunities for all teachers, and more paid preparation time for teachers during the school day. By increasing the amount of teachers there are in a school district, students with E/BD, along with non-disabled peers, would greatly benefit from smaller student to teacher ratios. An increased budget would allow administrators to be more inclined to support teachers' consultative and curriculum training needs to more effectively teach students with E/BD in an inclusive setting. By increasing educational funding teachers could have more paid preparation time to plan needed antecedents and classroom/curricular modifications for successful inclusive practice. Teachers will gain confidence with these increased supports, which has a direct impact on positive inclusive practices and student results.

#### *4.3 The culture of schools and school policies concerning students with E/BD in an inclusive setting*

Including students with disabilities in the general education classroom requires both flexibility and cohesion within a school setting. Every school and the community it

serves come with unique cultural, social, and economic factors that all play into its inclusive practices. For instance, is the community (generally speaking) culturally and socially individualistic in nature, or does it lean more towards a holistic approach to educating its children? If the school engenders more of an individualistic mentality (i.e., every man for himself) then its philosophy of inclusion will be more exclusive and rigid than accepting. However, if the community caters to a more holistic understanding of education, the inclusion of students will come naturally.

Although there are different approaches to inclusion between different schools, it is my understanding that all schools have the capacity for inclusion of students with E/BD. Regardless of the school's philosophy toward inclusion, it is important that all staff members, as well as members of the greater community, become active agents in its implementation. School/community-wide continuity is essential to create the most stable environment for including students with E/BD, as well as other students with or without disabilities. Only with the coordinated effort of the faculty, staff, and the greater community to carry out the goal of inclusion of students with E/BD in the general education population will there be any chance of reaching the best possible outcomes for all involved.

The social aspects of a classroom are powerful factors when considering effective antecedents to a successful inclusive setting. How educators, students, and the environment of the classroom interact serve as change agents in providing a safe and productive place for students with E/BD to thrive in the general education setting. Change agents used in the classroom include; time of day, subject matter, noise levels, level of structure, and teacher and student proximity. As the teacher gets to know the student with E/BD and their needs,

the teacher can modify these change agents to best support his or her unique strengths and weaknesses.

#### *4.4 The quality of support for pupils with E/BD in an inclusive setting*

Most students with E/BD have had multiple experiences with coming in and out of inclusive classrooms. These inclusive experiences have typically not resulted in the objectives they set out to accomplish. One characteristic of students who have emotional and behavioral disorders is that they experience continual transitions throughout their education. This promotes insecurity and instability in their personal lives that only adds to the inclusive settings' many challenges that need to be overcome. It is in this area that inclusive teams must initially focus a great deal of their energy. The question then arises, "how do you create stability in an inclusive setting for a student who has only known instability in order to increase ongoing inclusive success?"

A positive first impression of a student with E/BD to the inclusive setting is key for the introduction of students with E/BD. Conversely, a negative first impression could take away any initial positive attitudes they may have had. A school-wide mission statement is needed to help students with E/BD, as well as all general education students, buy in to the goal of inclusion. This will help provide the hospitable atmosphere conducive to a strong inclusive setting. Welcoming the student by offering a personalized student-led tour of the school's facilities and daily routines would be a great first start.

After the initial school-wide welcome is concluded, initiating the first introduction to the student's home classroom is the next step. Here, the student will meet his or her teacher and classmates for the first time. Making this a welcoming environment for the

student with E/BD takes some preparation on the general education teacher's part. This would entail getting all the information possible to set up the room for the new student's success which will allow the teacher and other students feel ready for all that the student with E/BD will bring to the classroom, both positive and negative.

*4.5 Degree of knowledge, understanding, and expertise of general education teachers in an inclusive setting*

With preparation a teacher will be more effective and consistent in providing an effective curriculum for their students. Students with disabilities in an inclusive setting not only require, but demand preparedness. There is no amount of training that can fully prepare a teacher for what a student with E/BD will bring to the classroom. Teachers who try to include students with disabilities without needed training prove ineffective and usually are more harmful than good. Without proper training, teachers often become overwhelmed and in turn distance themselves from their students and each student's unique needs. Conversely, the more appropriate training a teacher receives in working with students with disabilities in an inclusive setting, the more likely they will have a positive outcome. The more the teacher knows the more positive their outlook will be.

Speaking to the specific needs of students with E/BD in an inclusive setting, it is important that teachers are trained with evidenced-based interventions and that they are comfortable in their implementation. Positive behavior support is an integral part of supporting the needs of students with E/BD. Learning how to implement and promote student autonomy in an inclusive setting through a practical self-management system is considered to be effective in supporting students with E/BD. Lastly, and most importantly,

whatever intervention system the teacher decides to implement, it is essential the teacher become very familiar with it as well as giving it plenty time to take effect.

## **5. Conclusion**

Beginning with the Supreme Court case of Brown vs. Education in 1954 and ending with the IDEA act of 2004, educating students with special needs has evolved to take on increased inclusion demands. Today, there are federally and state mandated laws that require all students to be provided a free and public education in the least restrictive environment possible. Deciding on what the least restrictive environment is for each individual student depends on his or her unique needs. Deciding the most appropriate educational environment for students with E/BD is often times blurred due to teachers' inabilities, abandonment, and lack of interest in working with these students.

All students with disabilities deserve and require the most up to date evidence-based interventions as possible to meet their unique needs in any given classroom setting. Unfortunately, students with E/BD experience exclusion from the general education setting more than any other student due to inadequate research, decreased budgetary funding, and lack of teacher support in their disability area. Adding to this poverty, most teachers show the least amount of motivation or interest in working with students with E/BD due to the negative stereotypes attached to their disability. All of this together leaves most students with E/BD in constant transition struggling to find stability in our educational system.

Increasing demands on teachers without also increasing supports is limiting the scope of inclusion in general education classroom. Even the best teachers in our schools are

unable to reach all the needs of their thirty plus regular education students, let alone consider providing modifications for students with E/BD. A sound inclusive environment for teaching students with E/BD is one where the teacher is well trained in implementing evidence-based curriculum, has a low student to teacher ratio, and is provided with increased planning time to review what is working and not working in order to make changes accordingly.

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