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## **K–2 Teachers’ Perspectives on Managing Student Behaviors in Inclusive Classrooms**

Hailey Camp Kilcrease  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Hailey C. Kilcrease

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

K–2 Teachers' Perspectives on Managing Student Behaviors in Inclusive Classrooms

by

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EdS, Georgia Southwestern State University, 2016

MA, Georgia Southwestern State University, 2013

BS, Georgia Southwestern State University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2024

## Abstract

Since the start of the full inclusion movement, K–2 general education teachers have been overwhelmed with their behavior management due to the increased numbers of students with disabilities in their classroom who display emotional/behavioral challenges. This basic qualitative study aimed to explore K–2 teachers’ perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, along with what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. M.A. Barnes’ inclusive education conceptual framework supported and guided the research study and data analyses. The sample for this study was 12 K–2 general education teachers (a) who were licensed general education teachers, (b) who have taught for at least one year in an inclusive setting, and (c) who had previously worked with or have worked with students with emotional behavior disorders. Data were collected by asking specific interview questions to address each research question and used audio recording and open coding of the verbatim transcribed interview contents. A thematic analysis of interview data was conducted using NVivo 14. K–2 teachers believe they need classroom management strategies, evidence-based practices, and teaching practices to minimize the effects of disruptive behaviors in inclusive classrooms. K–2 teachers describe the loss of instruction time, professional development, teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, and teacher preparation as barriers affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. This study can lead to positive social change by providing teachers with practical, research-based, and high-quality coaching to manage students’ challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms.

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## Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. My husband and children have been my biggest supporters. They have encouraged, pushed, and cried with me, and most importantly, loved me through this whole experience. My dissertation work could not have been done without my sisters, brothers, and friends who prayed for me, brought me Snickers Ice Cream bars, left cookies at my doorstep, provided dinner many nights, and babysat my children so I could get my schoolwork done, as well as taking time out of their day to call and check up on me.

I also dedicate my dissertation work to my father, Jack Camp. I am uniquely grateful to the man who encouraged me never to give up. He always said, "Education is something no one can take away from you. Keep going and do not give up." I knew then that I wanted to do something extraordinary to make him proud. He is a big inspiration to me, and I know he is smiling down from Heaven.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background**

Classroom management (CM) plays an important role in a learner's classroom achievement. CM is the process of directing and managing the business of the classroom (Sunday et al., 2022), which involves establishing and sustaining the environment of the classroom so that learning goals and opportunities can be met (Sunday et al., 2022). According to Seufert et al. (2022), teachers cannot effectively and sufficiently manage a classroom without CM skills, which help keep students focused, on task, and productive with academics. When CM skills are implemented by teachers, behavioral issues can be prevented or addressed (Zoder-Martell et al., 2023). Classrooms that are poorly managed often result from disruptive behaviors. Disruptive behaviors consist of sleeping in class, tantrums, name-calling, verbal and physical threats to the teacher or other students in the classroom, and noises (Sunday et al., 2022).

Inclusion is defined as a student's least restrictive environment (Stites et al., 2018). Inclusive classrooms consist of students with behavioral disorders who were placed in the classroom based on their individualized educational program (IEP). According to Stites et al. (2018) teachers have reported feeling underprepared accommodating students with disabilities because of a lack of guidance from supervisors in their field. Additionally, the implementation of inclusive instructional strategies can be inconsistent (Stites et al., 2018). When teachers are provided with adequate training in high-quality inclusive instructional strategies, teachers can meet the needs of students with disruptive behaviors (El Ahmad, 2022). One major concern mentioned by Tryfon et

al. (2021) is that parents are disturbed that teachers are not receiving adequate training in inclusive education, noting that teachers who do not receive sufficient training in inclusive teaching practices reduce the curricular demands that are expected of students.

Teachers receive little professional development in effectively teaching students with challenging behaviors (Scott & Burt, 2018). Teachers have reported a need for strategies and necessary skills to manage students who have emotional and behavioral concerns. Scott and Burt (2018) mentioned that when teachers are unable to manage classroom behaviors, there is less instruction happening and poorer academic outcomes. Effective interventions and support for emotional and behavioral disorders are needed.

Since the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) and the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) were passed, teachers have been required to teach students with varying disabilities (The EHA was retitled the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, in a 1990 reauthorization (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2023), children were denied access to education and learning before EHA was passed. Since the passage of EHA in 1975, U.S. schools reported providing 7.5 million students with disabilities special education and learning services since the passage of the bill (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). With students' varying disabilities, teachers have reported behavior management as a professional need in inclusive classrooms (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). Prior to placing students with emotional and behavioral disorders, school administrators should implement evidenced-based practices consisting of positive behavior interventions and supports and self-management practices (Lanternman et al.,

2021). According to Lanterman et al. (2021), teacher preparation programs help teachers learn to accommodate students with emotional and behavioral disorders by implementing evidence-based practices to support positive behavior.

According to Sobeck and Reister (2021), general education teachers are being faced with students who have behavior disorders. Teachers have reported feeling ill-prepared to succeed in inclusive classrooms due to these behaviors disturbing learning and teaching (Sobeck & Reister, 2021). Trent (2020) argued for the use of inclusion and diversity and noted that the role of general and special education teachers and mentors is to produce an inclusive and supportive environment for all students. To motivate success for all learners, teachers must reflect on their practices and engage in thoughtful decisions to promote a justifiable learning environment (Trent, 2020).

Walker et al. (2018) performed a meta-analysis to summarize 27 intervention studies that examined students in inclusive classroom settings receiving function-based interventions to address challenging behaviors. Function-based interventions were shown to improve student behaviors in a variety of school-inclusive settings. According to Walker et al., findings indicated significant reductions in challenging behavior and improvements in proper behaviors.

### **Problem Statement**

Since the start of the full inclusion movement, K–2 general education teachers' behavior management skills have been overwhelmed due to the increased numbers of students with disabilities in their classroom who display emotional/behavioral challenges (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). According to Sobeck and Reister (2021), it is not

known what obstacles early childhood education teachers face in their efforts to assist students with managing their behavior in inclusive classrooms. There are many positive outcomes for students with disabilities in general education classrooms such as developing positive relationships and reciprocating socially with their peers; however, inclusion has created several complications for teachers (Sobeck & Reister, 2021). Teachers play a significant role in generating an inclusive learning environment for all students (Trent, 2020). Brock and Beaman-Diglia (2018) reported that one of the biggest challenges for teachers when teaching students with disabilities is managing classroom behavior. Students with disabilities can be included and educated if classroom behaviors are managed. When teachers successfully implement inclusive behavior practices, student academic outcomes are enhanced (Lanterman et al., 2021).

General education teachers receive limited pre-service training in individual behavior management practices compared to special education teachers (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). In a recent study, fewer than half of students with emotional behavior disorders were placed in a general education classroom for most of the day (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Many schools rely on multitiered systems of support (MTSS) to respond to behaviors in an appropriate way that is evidence-based (Walker et al., 2018). Brock and Beaman-Diglia (2018) stated that when classroom management becomes an issue, it results in off-task time, and there is a decline in academic achievement. The loss of instructional time increases the indignation levels of teachers.



According to Scott and Burt (2018), teachers report the lack of strategies and necessary skills needed to respond to students who have emotional and behavioral disorders. When teachers cannot manage classroom behaviors, there is less instruction and poorer academic outcomes. Effective interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disorders are needed and should be managed with appropriate support. While participating in professional learning opportunities, teachers have discussed obstacles they face in their efforts to assist students with managing their behavior in inclusive classrooms. Office discipline referrals and the frequency of ISS are areas of concern where students are missing instruction due to being out of the classroom. Teachers are unable to manage students with behavior disorders, so the students are being asked to leave the general education classroom (K–2 Teacher, personal communication, May 24, 2022).

In the local setting, the ability to manage and supervise students with behavioral disorders has been challenging. Data from the local school district show that in the 2018–2019 school year, five students received 7 combined days of out-of-school suspension (OSS), and three students received 6.5 combined days of in-school suspension (ISS). In the 2019–2020 school year, four students received 5 combined days of OSS, and three students received 5.5 combined days of ISS. In the 2020–2021 school year, three students received 4 combined days of OSS, and four students received 6 combined days of ISS. In the 2021–2022 school year, four students received four combined days of OSS, and one student received 1 day in ISS. During the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 school years, the COVID-19 pandemic causing the school system to shut down part of the school year

resulting in students taking part in virtual learning to obtain their education (Lee County Special Education Department, 2022). In short, students with behavior disabilities are being removed from the classroom due to their disruptive behaviors in the inclusion classroom setting.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore K–2 teachers’ perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. Increased understanding of the teachers’ perceptions may provide administrators with information to assist teachers with managing students’ behavior in inclusive classrooms. The results of this study might be used to create professional development for teachers.

### **Research Question**

RQ1: What do K–2 teachers believe they need to do to better manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms?

RQ2: What barriers and facilitators do K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The logical connections between the creation of the inclusive classroom conceptual framework (CICCF) and my study are the goals of removing barriers and enabling all students to participate and learn within a general education setting. To encourage, challenge, and engage students in inclusive environments, Barnes emphasized

the importance of collaboration and the use of strategies to benefit the needs of all students, with and without disabilities. Pandey (2021) also stated that team effort is required between special education teachers, general education teachers, and school counselors in solving problems for students. Collaboration helps those involved with the preparedness for the implementation of the inclusion classroom model.

### **Nature of the Study**

A basic qualitative approach with interviews was implemented. Data from individual interviews provide descriptive information and validated emerging themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The methodology aligned with the problem and purpose of exploring K–2 teachers' perspectives of having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. The research questions, which were developed using the conceptual framework as a focus, addressed what teachers believed they needed to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms and their preparedness for the implementation of the inclusion classroom model. The basic qualitative approach was appropriate for this study by providing flexible ways of collecting, examining, and clarifying the data. Exploring K–2 teachers' perceptions of what they needed to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms, and the barriers and facilitators for the implementation of the inclusion classroom model would not have been feasible using statistical analysis of numerical data.

## Definition of Key Terms

Throughout the study, the following key terms are used. A definition of each term is listed below.

*Disruptive Student Behaviors:* Disruptive student behaviors occur when a student repeatedly misbehaves in class (de Ruiter et al., 2020).

*Emotional Behaviors Disorders (EBD):* Students with EBD exhibit externalizing and internalizing behaviors in schools that obstruct attending to academic instruction and obeying the teacher's directions (McGuire & Meaddan, 2022). Students with EBD can exhibit the inability to learn, the inability to sustain interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, and feelings and behaviors that are inappropriate under ordinary conditions (Gagnon, 2022).

*Individualized Educational Program (IEP):* An IEP is a legal document containing the descriptive needs of a student with a disability and the instructional goals and services provided to the child in requirement of a free and appropriate public education (Pisacone, 2022).

*Least Restrictive Environment:* Inclusion is defined as a student's least restrictive environment. It refers to the learning of students with disabilities adjacent to their nondisabled peers (Stites et al., 2018).

*Professional Development:* Professional development is training intended to enable teachers to acquire new professional skills, effectiveness, competence, and practices (Meyer et al., 2023).

### **Assumptions**

Several assumptions were believed when conducting this research. First, I assumed that professional development in managing inclusive classrooms was not a priority for administrators. Furthermore, I assumed that the participants were honest when providing their answers to the interview questions. The impartiality of the research was based on interviews of the early childhood education teachers' perspectives on managing classroom behaviors in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K-2nd grade teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. I also assumed that a qualitative approach was more appropriate when steering this research. In qualitative research, the researcher can get truthful reporting and quotations from actual conversations.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The qualitative research process was initiated through teacher interviews. The intention was to explore K-2 teachers' perspectives of having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K-2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. The teacher interviews were an appropriate method to use to understand the experiences of teachers when it comes to managing behaviors in an inclusive classroom and what can be done to improve classroom management in an inclusive classroom setting.

### **Limitations**

One challenge of this study was social desirability bias (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). The teachers were asked questions that were focused on a sensitive topic. The

respondents may have given answers to the questions being asked to make them look good, thus disguising their true experiences and opinions. However, the interviewees signed a consent form that informed participants their responses would be kept confidential, and that they could opt out of answering an interview question as well as stop participation at any time without penalty.

Another challenge was recruitment. The grade range for the study was small. Successful recruitment and retention of participants were needed for the research study to be successful. The perceptions from K–2 teachers on what they believe they need to do better to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms may not be the same perceptions from grades 3–12 teachers. The barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom may not be the same barriers and facilitators grades 3–12 teachers have, which limits generalizability.

### **Significance**

This study was significant in that an increased understanding of the teachers' perceptions may provide administrators with information to assist teachers with managing students' behavior in inclusive classrooms. The results of this study could be used to create professional development for teachers that is effective, research-based, and of high quality, with coaching involved. This study can lead to positive social change by providing teachers with effective, research-based, and high-quality coaching to manage students' challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms and provided them with what they needed to improve their abilities to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms. The Every Student Succeeds Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act both mandate educators to use scientifically validated interventions to improve student behaviors (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). When teachers are provided with professional development that is effective, research-based, and of high-quality, students' and teachers' needs are met.

### **Summary**

Classroom management involves establishing and sustaining the environment of the classroom so that learning goals and opportunities can be met. Inclusive classrooms consist of students with behavioral disorders who are placed in their least restrictive environment to receive an education. Due to a lack of guidance from supervisors, teachers have reported feeling underprepared to meet the requirements of students with disabilities. Research indicated that teachers receive little professional development in meritoriously teaching students with challenging behaviors.

The problem addressed through this research was, since the start of the full inclusion movement, K–2 general education teachers have seen their behavior management skills overwhelmed due to the increased numbers of students with disabilities in their classroom who display emotional/behavioral challenges. Lanterman et al. (2021) stated that when teachers productively implement inclusive behavior practices, positive student academic outcomes increase. When classroom management becomes an issue, it results in off-task time, and there is a decline in academic achievement. The CICC (Pandey, 2021) impacts teachers by emphasizing the importance of collaboration and the use of strategies to benefit the needs of all students, with and without disabilities.

Collaboration helps those involved with the preparedness for the implementation of the inclusion classroom model.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore K–2 teachers' perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. The nature of this research included data from individual interviews. This design approach consisted of qualitative data collection through interview questions. This research can provide teachers with effective, research-based, and high-quality coaching to manage students' challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms and provide them with what they need to improve their abilities to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms, which can lead to positive social change.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this research study was to explore K–2 teachers' perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. Since the start of the full inclusion movement, K–2 general education teachers have seen their behavior management skills overwhelmed due to the increased numbers of students with disabilities in their classrooms who display emotional/behavioral challenges. When classroom management becomes an issue, it results in off-task time and decreases student academic achievement. Scott and Burt (2018) stated that teachers receive little professional development in effectively teaching students with challenging behaviors. Since the 1975 EHA and the 2002 NCLB were passed, teachers have been obligated to teach students with varying disabilities. Conversely, general education teachers receive limited pre-service training in an effective classroom and individual behavior management practices compared to special education teachers.

This literature review aims to identify research on the topic, examine gaps in the literature, and provide literature to support the proposed study. The following themes emerged from the literature review on K–2 teachers' perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom: (a) classroom management with disruptive students, (b) teacher preparation

and efficacy (c) evidenced-based practices for classroom management, (d) professional development, (e) teacher collaboration, and (f) effects of disruptive behaviors.

This literature review begins with an overview of the conceptual framework that guides this study. A historical overview of special education is described in detail to better understand the federal initiatives legislated for special needs students and the services provided for them in their least restrictive environment. EBD is discussed in depth to deliver an understanding of the disorders and the needs required concerning education and school life. The next subject, the practice of inclusion in a general education classroom, is described in detail. Finally, the themes that emerged from the literature review are discussed.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In this literature review, search engines were accessed through Walden University's online library research system. Databases used included ScienceDirect, ERIC, Sage Journals Online, and Proquest Research Library. Education Source, an education database containing articles scoped for the discipline, was also used in this literature review. Google Scholar was used to supplement research information.

Keywords and phrases used in the search included *inclusive classroom OR inclusive education, professional development OR teacher development, students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms, teacher challenges, classroom management, disruptive students, emotional behavior disorder, teacher preparedness, professional development, and behavior management skills.*

## Conceptual Framework

The 2021 CICCFF removes barriers and enables all students to participate and learn within a general education setting effectively. Researcher Barnes (2021) produced the CICCFF after a career as a school teacher and a M. Phil in Rehabilitation Psychology, focusing on learning disabilities and interventions. The CICCFF was designed to encourage, challenge, and engage students in inclusive environments, which makes it the ideal conceptual framework. This conceptual framework supports and guides this research study by accentuating the purposeful course of action of those involved. The framework impacts teachers by emphasizing the importance of teamwork and strategies to benefit the needs of all students, with and without disabilities. Pandey (2021) states that team effort is required between special education teachers, general education teachers, and school counselors to solve student difficulties. Teamwork helps those involved with the preparation for the execution of the inclusion classroom model.

Inclusive education and classrooms should meet the needs of regular education students and the least restrictive environment requirements for students with disabilities. The inclusion of children with special requirements has grown into a prosperous practice. Inclusion requires that students receive evidence-based provisions to respond to academic and behavioral expectations (Honkasilta et al., 2019). Inclusive settings allow students to learn better, develop adaptive behaviors, and improve academic skills (Tryfon et al., 2021).

The 2021 CICCFF supports current research by emphasizing the importance of training and supporting general education teachers to implement inclusive education

successfully. The study by Ackah-Jnr and UDAH (2021) supports the need for amplified support for teachers in inclusive education. According to Ackah-Jnr (2020), teachers are influential in leading change and practice in ECE and inclusive education. For inclusive early childhood education (IECE) to be successful, teachers must plan, teach, and assess practices. For all students to have equitable and quality education, IECE must be effective.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

#### **Historical Overview of Special Education**

The IDEA defined special education as instruction explicitly created for the learning needs of individuals with disabilities, irrespective of the environment (Francisco et al., 2020). Special education was designed not just for individuals with disabilities but also for at-risk diverse learners. According to Francisco et al. (2020), special education is a collection of teaching practices designed to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. These teaching practices are implemented by well-trained special education teachers rather than teachers in untrained general education classrooms.

In 1968, a set of principles, applied behavior analysis, emerged. This scientific approach focused on how behaviors change and learning occurs (Francisco et al., 2020). The applied behavior analysis approach helped increase the understanding of how behaviors could be changed based on understanding the nature of the behaviors. Given these, children with special needs can be integrated into general education classrooms with appropriate interventions.

In 1972, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Pennsylvania and Mills v. the Board of Education (District of Columbia) were two landmark cases that involved individuals with disabilities in schools. The PARC case resulted in children ages 6-21 with mental retardation being provided free education similar to regular students (Francisco et al., 2020). The court decision in the Mill case mandated that the Board of Education provide free public education to children with disabilities and the right to resolve disputes with the school regarding a child's education. These court cases resulted in the enactment of the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA). The EHA was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, in a 1990 reauthorization (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2023), children were denied access to education and learning before EHA was passed.

### ***1950s, 1960s, and 1970s: Initial Federal Response***

To implement effective services and programs, the federal government, with advocacy and support from family associations, developed and validated practices for disabled children and their families (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). The Training of Professional Personnel Act of 1959 helped children with mental retardation get the services they needed by training leaders to educate them accordingly. The Teachers of the Deaf Act of 1961 implemented training for instructional personnel to provide services to children who were hard of hearing or deaf (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). The Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act of 1963 allowed previous training programs to train across all disability areas. Further, the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the State Schools Act provided grant assistance to facilities to educate children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). The Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act of 1968 allowed preschool-aged, handicapped children to receive support in programs and increased enrollment for children with disabilities into Head Start programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). These acts were implemented, but many children were still denied opportunities to learn and access education.

### ***Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973***

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandates organizations (e.g., public schools) that receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education to provide students with an appropriate and free education, irrespective of ability level (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2019). Under Section 504, students with obstacles that are impacting their academic success receive accommodations that are school-based. These school-based accommodations give them an appropriate and free public education (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2019). The accommodations listed in the 504 plan are collaboratively created by the guardians, school staff, and, as appropriate, the student. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is enforced by examining procedures schools have that identify, evaluate, and place students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are legally eligible for free appropriate public education (Pisacone, 2022).

### ***Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975***

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA) provided federal funding to educate students with disabilities. States were given the funds once a

plan was submitted to ensure they met the requirements presented in the act (Pisacone, 2022). The EAHCA included many rights for students who were disabled. Students with disabilities should receive free public education (Karaxha et al., 2022). Students with disabilities had the right to be tested, evaluated, and placed accordingly in a non-discriminatory way that could deter their educational success (Pisacone, 2022). The EAHCA also authorized that students with disabilities be placed and educated in their least restrictive environment. The least restrictive environment for a student with a disability is the environment where the child learns and the services the child is receiving. When the use of services and supplemental aids does not help the student succeed in a regular educational environment, separate schooling and special classes are offered (Wilson et al., 2020). The EAHCA was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990. IDEA was shaped as a guide for special education privileges and procedures (Pisacone, 2022).

### ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990***

The IDEA organized particular education practices and policies in the United States. Congress passed the IDEA to ensure that students with disabilities receive special education services to meet their unique needs and prepare them for post-secondary education, independent living, and the workforce (Kors, 2022). Free appropriate public education, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, zero rejection, procedural due process, and parent participation are the six major principles of the IDEA (Lim, 2020). According to Pisacone (2022), regardless of disability, every child is entitled to an education that is free and appropriate. Every student is allowed an

evaluation of the suspected disability in all areas. Once the evaluation is complete, an IEP is created to dictate the programs and services provided. The child and parents' input are considered. During the education process, parents have due process rights and are entitled to challenge the treatment in the IEP.

In 1997, amendments were made to the IDEA. The discipline of students with disabilities section was also added. Many changes were made to the IEP to help improve educational results. A statement for measurable goals was added to the IEP to ensure that students with disabilities were receiving accurate measurements, and reporting of the student's progress was dictated within the IEP (Pisacone, 2022). The amendment of IDEA also included a section regarding students with disabilities and the discipline measures listed in the IEP. IDEA requires that students with disabilities and behavior issues have behavior interventions, strategies, and supports implemented by the IEP team. An IEP team consists of the teachers, parents of the child, and school officials (Kors, 2022). According to Kors (2022), this amendment was implemented in 1997 to increase parent participation in the IEP process. Alleged inadequacies in IEPs have been the cause of most legal cases. The school district needs to follow through with the formulated plan.

The partnership between families and schools is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. A meaningful partnership between the families and schools is needed to make shared decisions on the goals, services, and placements being made on the child's behalf (Brown & Mortier, 2020). Safeguards and procedural guidelines were put into place to protect students and parents of students with disabilities



from discriminatory and unfair practices (Draper, 2020). Several amendments have been made to the IDEA to ensure students receive an appropriate and free education.

### ***No Child Left Behind Act***

The NCLB was signed into legislation by President George W. Bush. It held schools accountable for student achievement by focusing on standardized assessments. The NCLB Act allowed schools to see where students needed additional support and were making progress, regardless of their disability, race, income, home language, background, or zip code (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Over time, the NCLB's requirements became unworkable for educators and the school systems. According to Ricca (2022), NCLB failed because education is a complex system, and the NCLB Act was unsuccessful at recognizing that.

### ***Every Student Succeeds Act***

In 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSE) into law. The provisions made by President Obama ensured that schools and students were successful by ensuring students would be taught academic standards that prepared them to succeed in college and careers, advance equity by protecting the high-need and disadvantaged students and upholding the expectation that lowest-performing schools not exhibiting effective positive change will be held accountable (U.S Department of Education, 2020).

### **Emotional/Behavioral Disorders**

Students with EBD show inappropriate behaviors, poor interpersonal relationships, and academic problems (Soares et al., 2022). The difficulties of teaching

EBD students in a general education setting are numerous. According to McGuire and Meaddan (2022), some EBD students spend most of their day in a general education classroom. Students with EBD exhibit externalizing and internalizing behaviors in schools that obstruct attending to academic instruction and obeying the teacher's directions (McGuire & Meaddan, 2022). Students with EBD can exhibit the inability to learn, the inability to support interpersonal relationships with others, and emotions and behaviors that are inappropriate under ordinary conditions (Gagnon, 2022). These behaviors can hinder the student's success alongside their peers.

If students try to construct relationships with peers, the maladaptive behaviors that some students with EBD present may create challenges for students in maintaining peer relationships. Students who are recognized with behavioral or emotional disorders not only struggle with building and maintaining peer relationships but also show deficits in academic content areas (Peltier et al., 2022). When working with EBD students, teachers and paraprofessionals need to communicate and collaborate to support the students and one another. It is paramount for teachers and support staff to have the ability to communicate, coordinate, and deliver the support needed for EBD students to meet their complex needs in an inclusive classroom (Bronstein et al., 2022). When general and special education teachers collaborate, an inclusive learning community is created, and students can succeed.

### **Inclusion**

Inclusion is a student's least restrictive environment (Stites et al., 2018). Inclusive classrooms consist of students with behavioral disorders placed in the classroom based on

their IEP. There are two types of inclusion. There is social inclusion and general inclusion. Social inclusion allows students to interact with developing peers and participate in social activities. In social inclusion, the students have the opportunities for conjoint and positive relationships with adults and peers (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). General inclusion happens when students with disabilities actively participate in academic activities to increase academic learning and achievement (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). The essential elements for inclusive education achievement are the practices of the teachers. These well-intentioned practices can be implemented through professional development opportunities.

The support of inclusion from administrators is needed to ensure effective instruction for all students. When educators and administrators work together as a team, children with exceptionalities are supported, and a collaborative climate exists (Lunde, 2020). For suitable instruction to occur, collaboration with the team is needed to plan and measure the effectiveness of the instruction. Lopes and Oliveira (2021) mentioned that implementing the inclusion model is one of the biggest criticisms. In this approach, professional development is not part of the inclusion model, and the resources needed to implement inclusion are not considered before establishing an inclusive classroom (Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). General teachers' preparation and professional development to teach students with disabilities and lack of resources obstruct the academic achievement of inclusion students. Research indicates that when teachers are prepared and know about special education needs, those teachers feel more capable of embracing inclusive education for students with special needs (Nimante & Kokare, 2022).

## **Classroom Management with Disruptive Students**

Teachers, students, and the learning environment all influence the learning process (Sundarnoto, 2023). So, classroom management plays a vital role in a learner's classroom achievement and is essential when a classroom involves students with disabilities (Jha & Parashar, 2022). When a classroom is poorly managed, students with or without disabilities are unable to perform to the highest level. Classroom management directs and manages the classroom business (Sunday et al., 2022). It involves establishing and sustaining the classroom environment to meet learning goals and opportunities. Classrooms that are poorly managed are often so due to disruptive behaviors that include but are not limited to sleeping in class, tantrums, name-calling, verbal and physical threats to the teacher or other students, and noises (Sunday et al., 2022). Some behaviors are a result of a disability and are unpredictable. These students display symptoms like frustration, anger, and aggression (Jha & Parashar, 2022).

Classroom management with disruptive students negatively affects the learning and teaching environment. Disruptive behaviors have been one of the most significant challenges for novice and preservice teachers. While teachers have earned educational credentials teaching in classrooms with students who have disruptive behaviors, teachers indicate that there is a lack of professional development to work with students with behavioral disabilities. For teaching to be effective, it requires a mixture of respectable instruction and classroom management (Lekwa et al., 2019). A key element of high-quality teaching is a classroom that is well-organized and conducive to teaching (Marder et al., 2023). Awareness of classroom situations and active decision-making are required

for effective classroom management (Wolff et al., 2021). According to Marder et al. (2023), when teachers have classroom management skills, their students' learning outcomes are high quality. Without these classroom management skills, lessons planned are not effectively executed.

### **Teacher Preparation and Self-Efficacy**

Teachers face several challenges at the beginning of their teaching endeavors, such as juggling multiple student needs, crowded classrooms, accountability pressure, diverse skill levels, and behavioral management (Wilhelm et al., 2021). According to Crispel and Kasperski (2021), teachers in inclusive classrooms express frustration due to the educational system's need to address the lack of special education teaching techniques and knowledge. For inclusive teaching to be successful, the teachers' attitude regarding inclusion is essential (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). Due to the continuous increase in inclusive education, identifying and addressing general education classroom teachers' concerns regarding training and development is critical (Olayvar, 2022).

Evidence synthesized from Holmqvist and Lelinge's (2021) systematic review of the literature suggests that teachers need professional development in teaching students with special education needs. For effective inclusion to happen, teacher preparation needs to transpire. Effective inclusion consists of two teachers for one classroom, time allotted for the teachers to properly co-plan, and professional development with coaching and discussion (Soares et al., 2022). For teachers to collaborate and plan effectively, co-teaching and co-assessing are needed. General and special education teachers are prepared and confident in the inclusive classroom when these steps occur.

Self-efficacy is the belief to perform a certain way. It is the perception of the individual's power to complete the desired outcome (Kazanopoulos et al., 2022). Having confidence in succeeding reflects self-efficacy. Self-efficacy engages students by favoring their motivation and learning and having classroom management while working with unmotivated or disruptive students (Burić & Moè, 2022). Teachers with positive emotions and classroom experiences build self-efficacy and become more resilient, knowledgeable, and creative. Self-efficacy in an inclusive environment is higher with teachers trained in special education. Teacher efficacy is developed through the support the teacher experiences, such as informal and formal mentoring, instructional coaching, collaborative teacher meetings, and school leader support (Wilhelm et al., 2021).

### **Evidence-Based Practices for Classroom Management**

The inclusion of children with special requirements has grown into a prosperous practice. Inclusion requires that students receive evidence-based provisions to respond to academic and behavioral expectations (Honkasilta et al., 2019). Inclusive settings allow students to learn better, develop adaptive behaviors, and improve academic skills (Tryfon et al., 2021).

When teaching students in an inclusive setting, teachers utilize functional behavior assessments to gather the student's academic, social, or emotional behavior. The assessment data is collected, and function-based interventions are implemented to support student behavior (Cooper et al., 2020). Behavioral skills training must be incorporated to address the inadequacy of teacher awareness in implementing functional assessment behavior intervention elements (Griffith et al., 2022). According to Griffith et al. (2022),

behavioral skills training can be used to practice scenarios that consist of the components of the intervention, support teachers, and provide feedback by behavior support teams.

Walker et al. (2018) explained a meta-analysis that was performed to recapitulate intervention research studies where students in inclusive classroom settings received function-based interventions to address challenging behaviors. A total of 27 studies were identified and reviewed to determine the effect of function-based interventions on challenging behaviors. Function-based interventions were proven to improve student behaviors in various school-inclusive settings. There were significant reductions in challenging behavior and improvements in proper behavior. Teachers need effective, research-based, high-quality coaching in inclusive classrooms to manage students' challenging behaviors.

One of many examples of training programs includes BEST in CLASS (Granger et al., 2023). BEST in CLASS is a tier 2 teacher-delivered intervention. This intervention strives to improve children's behaviors by increasing positive teacher-child relationships and interactions and developing classroom environments that support students with or at risk for EBD (Granger et al., 2023). Teachers are trained and coached to use and deliver evidence-based instructional practices. Teachers identify students with externalizing behavior problems that interfere with their participation and learning. Then, those students are systematically screened. BEST in CLASS provides an interactive training class that consists of the six critical practices: (a) Rules, (b) Behavior Praise, (c) Precorrection, (d) Opportunities to Respond, (e) Corrective Feedback, and (f) Instructive Feedback (Granger et al., 2023). Promoting teacher well-being involves having access to

classroom management resources and support for evidence-based practice. Conroy et al. (2019) found that teachers who received practical professional development training were able to improve their classroom management with students with emotional and behavioral issues.

### **Professional Development**

Parada-Gañete et al. (2023) state that good educational practices have proven knowledge and dissemination of those practices improving teaching and learning. In the multiple case study provided by Parada-Gañete and Trillo-Alonso (2023), interviews were used to collect data on the perceptions of teachers about the characteristics of good practices. The results indicated the importance of having the necessary resources to attend to the multiplicity of students. Teachers who teach students with EBD have limited resources to support the needs of EBD students (Bettini et al., 2019). General educators feel unprepared to sufficiently educate and support students with EBD and implement evidence-based practices to address behavioral difficulties (McKenna et al., 2019). Inclusive school leadership is needed and consists of principals providing professional development for teachers to create a thriving, inclusive environment (DeMatthews et al., 2020). Conroy et al. (2019) mentioned the importance of providing all teachers with comprehensive professional development. This professional development facilitates the use of interventions in the classrooms.

Soares et al. (2022) explained that barriers are created when teaching students with EBD and must be overcome to increase the outcomes of students and teachers. There are several barriers and needs that result in educating students with EBD. Many



barriers and needs include challenging behaviors, limited support from other professionals, and limited knowledge and professional development (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). McGuire and Meadan (2022) compiled information from their research where educators felt they needed to feel supported or adequately prepared to educate students with EBD. When it came to challenging behaviors in the general education classroom, the student with EBD behaved in a way that resulted in the student being removed from the classroom. McGuire and Meadan revealed that educators have reported insufficient support provided by social workers and special educators and limited knowledge and professional development with the inclusion of students with EBD. Challenging behaviors, history of trauma, and mental health issues were areas where knowledge was lacking (McGuire et al., 2022). Professional development is provided to teachers to improve academic opportunities. However, students with EBD will struggle to master academics if social, emotional, and behavioral needs are not addressed in inclusive environments.

Having qualified and motivated teachers who are resourced is crucial in implementing inclusive education (Ackah-Jnr & UDAH, 2021). In a qualitative study performed by Ackah-Jnr and UDAH (2021), data collected from individual teachers from an early childhood school setting proved the omission of practices from teachers. The findings suggested that unwillingness to accept inclusive education limits engagement, learning, and social opportunities for students with disabilities. This study by Ackah-Jnr and UDAH supports the need for amplified support for teachers in inclusive education. According to Ackah-Jnr (2020), teachers are influential in leading change and practice in

IECE and inclusive eEducation. For inclusive early childhood education to be successful, teachers must plan, teach, and assess practices. For all students to have equitable and quality education, IECE must be effective. Due to socio-contextual differences, not all children in early childhood participate in IECE programs. IECE programs are intended to prevent possible delays and difficulties. To limit the frontiers of exclusion, teachers need the knowledge, skills, and actionable practices of IECE (Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021).

Collaborative professional development strengthens teacher engagement, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Collaborative teaching methods are essential to develop inclusive education for all students (Lelinge & Alwall, 2022). During collaborative professional development teachers are improving their teaching and learning by working together. The drive in professional development is collaboration. Collaboration supports professional learning (Bergmark, 2023).

### **Teacher Collaboration**

When teachers collaborate with other teachers, instructional practices are influenced (Hopkins et al., 2018). Teachers who collectively collaborate identify the need for improvement needs and can acclimatize practices fittingly (Meyer et al., 2022). Teacher collaboration and teachers' professional development are necessary. In teacher communities, teacher collaboration occurs, and professional development activities can be utilized to connect with teacher peers and identify the necessities needed to improve. Teacher experiences can be heard and learned from (Nordgren et al., 2021). Teacher collaboration is critical for schools to improve continuously. Collaboration of teachers

relates to teacher job satisfaction and is needed for student academic success (Toropova et al., 2021).

Whether teachers have the training needed to teach is critical. In a full-inclusion system, this feature is even more relevant. General education teachers do not receive adequate training to teach and work with students with disabilities (Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Special educators experience difficulties teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting due to not having time in the general education classroom, where behavior management is challenging.

Regarding inclusion, teachers play an essential role in the implementation process (Nimante & Kokare, 2022). Research indicates that the more professional learning opportunities provided in inclusive education, the more essential capabilities are gained to become exceptional inclusive educators (Monteiro et al., 2019). Co-teaching is an educational approach where general and special education teachers collaborate in the same environment with heterogeneous student groups and implement educational activities (McCaw, 2020). To create a learning atmosphere for students with special needs, the general and special education teachers must create course outcomes by working together and collaborating to demonstrate their expertise in their educational field for students (Battaglia & Brooks, 2019).

### **Effects of Disruptive Behaviors**

Teachers are faced with many challenges when it comes to disruptive behaviors. When teaching students with disruptive behaviors, the behaviors adversely impact the teacher's instructional delivery and the other student's ability to gain information from

the instruction (Reddy et al., 2022). In a study done in Sweden, results indicated that disruptive behaviors have effects on students' academic results (Bäckström, 2021). The classroom environment was the main factor contributing to the outcomes. When teachers spend time ensuring the classroom environment is appropriate and have to stop instruction to maintain order, instruction time is lost, and time off task is generated (Bäckström, 2021). When disruptive behavior occurs, the gap between the instruction time needed and the instruction time that is happening increases. According to Bäckström (2021), disruptive behaviors need to be accounted for when it comes to student academic results.

Due to disruptive behaviors, a survey reported that teachers lose 2.5 hours of instruction weekly (Education Advisory Board, 2019). The survey also reported that teachers feel poorly supported and unprepared to manage their classrooms. Teachers are also faced with the challenges of numerous demands that they are expected to execute. Teachers are expected to provide learning exercises that engage and meet the needs of students with and without disabilities and provide substantial support to those students with disabilities (Jeon et al., 2022). These demands are expected with limited job resources and professional development. These demands result in ongoing exposure to stressful situations and teacher burnout.

The feeling of ineffectiveness, emotional exhaustion, and lack of personal accomplishments are initiated when exposed to constant stressful situations (Jeon et al., 2022). These feelings can result in teacher burnout. According to Tan (2022), burnout occurs when the individual cannot function due to being stressed and lacking support.

When individuals feel tired or exhausted from their labor, alienated from the people they are required to work with, or have thoughts of being unable to perform the expected task, they may experience burnout (Tan, 2022). School leadership has been identified as one of the determinants involving a teacher's experience in the workforce concerning stress and attrition (Gui, 2019). Factors such as resources and support administrators provide either worsen or defend against teacher stress (Carroll et al., 2021). Challenging organizational aspects such as heavy workloads, lack of collaboration, and classroom management involving behavioral problems have also been known as motivated determinants in leaving the teaching profession (Elyashiv, 2019). Professional development with an emphasis on behavior management skills with students who display emotional/behavioral challenges may be one way to reduce the number of teacher burnouts.

### **Summary**

Since the start of the full inclusion movement, K–2 general education teachers have seen their behavior management skills overwhelmed due to the increased numbers of students with disabilities in their classrooms who display emotional/behavioral challenges. The CICCFF guided this study by emphasizing the importance of teamwork and the use of strategies to benefit the needs of all students, with and without disabilities. Pandey (2021) states that team effort is required between special education teachers, general education teachers, and school counselors to solve student difficulties.

Students with EBD show inappropriate behaviors, poor interpersonal relationships, and academic problems (Soares et al., 2022). These behaviors can hinder the student's success alongside their peers. When working with EBD students, teachers

and paraprofessionals need to communicate and collaborate to support the students and one another. Inclusive classrooms consist of students with behavioral disorders placed in the classroom based on their IEP. Teachers need effective, research-based, high-quality coaching in inclusive classrooms to manage students' challenging behaviors.

Teachers play an essential role in the implementation process regarding inclusion. Collaboration between the general and special education teachers is necessary to create a learning environment for students with special needs. Teachers with positive emotions and classroom experiences build self-efficacy and become more resilient, knowledgeable, and creative. Self-efficacy in an inclusive environment is higher with teachers trained in special education.

Classroom management with disruptive students negatively affects the learning and teaching environment. Disruptive behaviors have been one of the most significant challenges for novice and preservice teachers. When a classroom is poorly managed, students with or without disabilities are unable to perform to the highest level. When teachers have classroom management skills, their students' learning outcomes are high quality. These classroom management skills are necessary for lessons planned to be effectively executed.

Teachers in inclusive classrooms express frustration due to the educational system needing to address the lack of special education teaching techniques and knowledge. Due to the continuous increase in inclusive education, identifying and addressing general education classroom teachers' concerns regarding training and development is critical. For effective inclusion to happen, teacher preparation needs to transpire. Self-efficacy is

the belief to perform a certain way. Having confidence in succeeding reflects self-efficacy. Teachers with positive emotions and classroom experiences build self-efficacy and become more resilient, knowledgeable, and creative. Self-efficacy in an inclusive environment is higher with teachers trained in special education.

Inclusion requires that students are provided with evidence-based provisions to ensure they can respond to academic and behavioral expectations. Several assessments can be given to gather the student's academic, social, or emotional behavior. Once the assessment data is collected, function-based interventions can be implemented.

Behavioral skills training can be used to practice scenarios that consist of the components of the intervention, support teachers, and provide feedback by behavior support teams. BEST in CLASS is a tier 2 teacher-delivered intervention. This intervention strives to improve children's behaviors by increasing positive teacher-child relationships and interactions and developing classroom environments that support students with or at risk for EBD.

Teachers who teach students with EBD have limited resources to support the needs of EBD students. General educators feel unprepared to sufficiently educate and support students with EBD and implement evidence-based practices to address behavioral difficulties. Inclusive school leadership is needed and consists of principals providing professional development for teachers to create a thriving, inclusive environment. Having qualified and motivated teachers who are resourced is crucial in implementing inclusive education.

Collaborative professional development (CPD) strengthens teacher engagement,

self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Collaborative teaching methods are essential to develop inclusive education for all students. Teacher collaboration is critical for schools to improve continuously. Collaboration of teachers relates to teacher job satisfaction and is needed for student academic success.

Professional learning opportunities must be provided in inclusive education to gain exceptional inclusive educators. Co-teaching is an area where professional development is needed. It is an educational approach where general and special education teachers collaborate in the same environment with assorted student groups and implement educational activities. To create a learning atmosphere for students with special needs, the general and special education teachers must collaborate by creating course outcomes demonstrating their expertise in their educational field.

Teachers are faced with many challenges when it comes to disruptive behaviors. Teachers are losing instruction time due to disruptive behaviors. However, they are still expected to provide learning activities that engage and meet the needs of students with and without disabilities and provide substantial support to those students with disabilities. These burdens result in teacher burnout. Professional development may be one way to reduce the number of teacher burnouts and ensure that all students are receiving what is necessary to be successful in an inclusive setting and provide teachers with practical, research-based, and high-quality coaching to manage students' challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms and provide them with what they need to improve their abilities to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms resulting in positive social change.



### Chapter 3: Research Method

The general research problem that was addressed through this research study is that since the start of the full inclusion movement, K–2 general education teachers have seen their behavior management skills overwhelmed due to the increased numbers of students with disabilities in their classroom who display emotional/behavioral challenges (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). Classroom management is essential to student achievement (Zoder-Martell et al., 2023). Classroom management involves establishing and sustaining the classroom environment to meet learning goals and opportunities (Seufert et al., 2022). Classrooms that are poorly managed are often that way due to disruptive behaviors that include sleeping in class, tantrums, name-calling, verbal and physical threats to the teacher or other students, and noises (Sunday et al., 2022).

Since the 1975 EHA and the 2002 NCLB were passed, teachers have been required to teach students with varying disabilities. With the varying disabilities, teachers have reported behavior management as a professional need for managing behavior in inclusive classrooms (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). Inclusion is a student's least restrictive environment (Stites et al., 2018), and inclusive classrooms consist of students with behavioral disorders placed in the classroom based on their Individualized Educational Program (IEP). According to Stites et al. (2018), teachers have reported feeling underprepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities because of a lack of guidance from supervisors in their field. Teachers receive little professional development in effectively teaching students with challenging behaviors (Scott & Burt, 2018).

Teachers report the need for strategies and necessary skills to deal with students who have emotional and behavioral disorders.

This basic qualitative study aimed to explore K–2 teachers’ perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. Increased understanding of the phenomenon can give administrators the teachers’ perceptions of the struggles to assist students with managing student behavior in inclusive classrooms. The results of this study might be used to inform the creation of professional development for teachers.

The unit of analysis was educators in one rural, Title 1 primary school. The school district was in South Georgia. A purposive sample of 12-14 K–2 general education teachers from a primary school was selected. The number of participants was determined at the point of data saturation. All participants were (a) licensed general education teachers, (b) who had taught for at least one year in an inclusive setting, and (c) who had previously worked with or have worked with students with emotional behavior disorders.

Data were collected through interview questions designed to accumulate open-ended responses. The phenomenon was analyzed through the CICCFF. The logical connections between the CICCFF and this research study are removing barriers and effectively enabling all students to participate and learn within a general education setting.

Chapter 3 presents the method and design used to complete this research study. First, the research design is explained. Then, the role of the researcher is described. Next,

the methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures are explained in detail. Last, a summary of Chapter 3 is provided. The following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: What do K–2 teachers believe they need to do to better manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms?

RQ2: What barriers and facilitators do K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom?

### **Research Design and Rationale**

A basic qualitative study with interviews was implemented. This research design approach consisted of data collection through interview questions. The data from the individual interviews provided descriptive information, tracked changes and growth, and validated emerging hypotheses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The methodology aligned with the problem and purpose by exploring K–2 teachers' perspectives of having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. Specifically, the research questions collected data on what teachers believed they needed to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms and their preparedness for implementing the inclusion classroom model.

This qualitative approach was appropriate for this study in that it provided flexible ways of collecting, examining, and clarifying the data and information. Exploring what K–2 teachers believed they needed to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms and the barriers and facilitators for implementing the inclusion classroom model had a more realistic outcome that is not easily produced through statistical analysis and

numerical data.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The planned research design used transcripts from semistructured interviews with 12 teachers. I collected the data by asking specific interview questions to address each research question and used audio recording and open coding of the verbatim transcribed interview contents. I familiarized myself with the data, produced initial codes, examined, reviewed, described, and retitled themes, and produced the report. I also used thematic analysis to analyze the data across the data set to recognize, examine, and report any patterns present.

### **Methodology**

#### **Participant Selection**

The population for this study involved K–2 general education teachers who had previously worked with or have worked with students with emotional behavior disorders in an inclusive classroom. A purposive sample of 12-14 K–2 general education teachers from a primary school was selected. The number of participants was determined at the point of data saturation. All participants were (a) licensed general education teachers, (b) who had taught for at least one year in an inclusive setting, and (c) who had previously worked with or have worked with students with emotional behavior disorders. The participants were selected from one of the primary schools located in the rural school district. The sample size of 12-14 participants allowed for more in-depth exploring of K–2 general teachers' perspectives of having a broad range of students with disabilities in

inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom.

### **Instrumentation**

An interview questionnaire was designed to collect the data for the research analysis (see Appendix A). The data were collected by conducting face-to-face interviews using Zoom’s virtual meeting platform and asking specific interview questions to address the research study. The interview questionnaire was designed to accumulate open-ended responses that enabled exploration and in-depth answers. I also conducted audio recordings and open coding of the transcribed interviews.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The unit of analysis was educators in one rural Title 1 primary school. The school district was in South Georgia. A purposive sample of 12-14 K–2 general education teachers from a primary school was selected. The number of participants was determined at the point of data saturation. Data saturation was met when no additional issues or insights were recognized, and data began to replicate themselves and became redundant (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). All participants were (a) licensed general education teachers, (b) who had taught for at least one year in an inclusive setting, and (c) who had or were currently working with students who have emotional behavioral disorders.

Data were collected through Zoom using the virtual meeting platform, and interview questions were designed to give open-ended responses. I completed 3-5 participant interviews each week over 3 weeks. Before the study began, permission was obtained through the IRB of Walden University to conduct the study. The initial contact

with the participants was made through the appropriate email associated with the school district. The email contained an explanation of the study, confidentiality procedures, and a response on whether the participant was willing to participate. To get 12-14 volunteers, I needed to use various recruitment strategies designed to reach a large enough number of prospective individuals to get the needed sample size.

The participants who answered “yes” to the email regarding participating in the research study had an email sent with the informed consent form, which included the confidentiality and privacy procedures during and after the study. Once the informed consent form was returned, the interview questionnaire was provided to the participant (see Appendix A). The participants were allowed to exit the study at any time. If a participant decided to exit the study, he or she was asked to let me know that he or she wished to withdraw and, therefore, no longer participate.

This study involved completing a confidential in nature face-to-face audio-recorded interview using Zoom’s virtual meeting platform. I used the interview guide (see Appendix B) to help guide me through the interviews. The interviews began with an introduction consisting of open-ended questions for the interviewee that focused on the research questions and ended with a closing. In the introduction, the interviewer introduced herself, explained the interview process clearly, and asked the interviewee if he/she had any questions or misunderstandings before getting started. I provided the open-ended questions, and the interviewee provided the answers. In the closing part of the interview protocol, I asked the interviewee if he/she had any additional information he/she would like to provide and thanked the interviewee for their participation in the

study. A follow-up question was posed to the interviewee for any response requiring additional information. The interviewee reviewed a typed interview transcript once it had been transcribed to make corrections if needed. Then, the interviewee communicated with me once more to hear my interpretations and had the opportunity to give additional feedback.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I used 12 transcripts from K–2 general education teachers' semistructured interviews for my planned research design. I collected the data by asking specific interview questions to address each research question and used audio recording and open coding of the verbatim transcribed interview contents. Coding is when the researcher assigns significance to the data that was collected. A code can consist of a word or phrase explaining the data's existence (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Once data exploration was completed, the codes were put into categories, and themes were developed. Themes represent essential concepts in the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Themes are casual explanations, summary statements, or conclusions. The thematic analysis involved familiarizing the researcher with data, producing initial codes, examining themes, reviewing themes, describing, and retitling themes, and producing the report (Singh et al., 2022). A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data across the data set to recognize, examine, and report any patterns present.

### **Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers can incorporate vital measures to address qualitative research's quality, trustworthiness, and credibility. Quality is the rigor and validity of the

research (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The quality of the research provided ethical evidence, was vigorous, and was used to advise. Different measures were used to collect and explore the data. The trustworthiness of qualitative research is often questioned as trustworthiness is the element of truth in research. It is a priority for researchers to confirm the credibility of the research to help establish its trustworthiness (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). As the researcher, I collected the data and explored it truthfully. The credible data were an accurate illustration of the participants and their experiences.

This research aimed to make the findings credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. The data collected were analyzed carefully and truthfully to ensure creditability. Transferability was confirmed by sharing the exclusion and inclusion criteria and descriptive data. Dependability refers to data consistency and was ensured by my being consistent in collecting the data. All research notes, materials, data management, and sampling were accessed in the future by anyone wanting to audit the study to confirm. As the researcher, I had a contextual relationship with the participants. The contextual relationship allowed reflexivity to increase the credibility of the findings.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Before the study began, permission was obtained from the IRB of Walden University to conduct the study. One challenge of this study was social desirability bias (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). The teachers were asked questions that were focused on a sensitive topic. The respondents may have answered the questions in a way to make them look good, thus disguising their authentic experiences and opinions. However, one of the first steps after identifying the participants was to obtain a consent form. The



interviewees signed a consent form to inform them that their responses would be kept confidential, and participants would be reminded that they were free to opt out of answering an interview question and stop participation at any time without penalty. The data collected from each interviewee would be kept confidential by taking necessary safekeeping measures, including password protection on technology devices, data encryption, using codes in place of names, storing names separately from the data, and discarding names. Another challenge was recruitment itself.

### **Summary**

K–2 general education teachers have seen their behavior management skills overwhelmed due to the increased number of students with disabilities in their classroom who display emotional/behavioral challenges. Increased understanding of the phenomenon can give administrators the teachers' perceptions of the struggles to assist students with managing student behavior in inclusive classrooms.

A basic qualitative study was conducted to obtain the perspectives of K–2 general education teachers on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. The research questions addressed the importance of teacher preparation and self-efficacy, evidenced-based practices for classroom management, professional development, teacher collaboration, and the effects of disruptive behaviors.

I used 12 transcripts from semistructured interviews with K–2 general education teachers. I collected the data by asking specific interview questions to address each

research question and used audio recording and open coding of the verbatim transcribed interview contents. I also focused on making the findings credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. All data collected from the interviewee were kept confidential by taking necessary security measures. The results of this study might be used to create professional development for teachers. The findings of this study are reported in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore K–2 teachers' perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers described as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. Content analysis was used to determine themes from the qualitative data that was collected through the analysis of the interviews. NVivo 14 was used to organize the codes and themes from my semistructured interviews. The interviews I conducted allowed the study participants to express what they believe they need to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms and their preparedness for implementing the inclusion classroom model.

This results section begins with the study's setting and how the data were collected. Next, the data analysis and results are described in detail. Then, the evidence of trustworthiness and chapter summary are provided. The following research questions guided the research:

RQ1: What do K–2 teachers believe they need to do to better manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms?

RQ2: What barriers and facilitators do K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom?

### **Setting**

The study's setting consisted of educators in one rural Title 1 primary school. There were 12 K–2 general education teachers selected from a South Georgia primary school. All participants were (a) licensed general education teachers, (b) who have taught

for at least one year in an inclusive setting, and (c) who had or were currently working with students who have emotional behavioral disorders. The teachers that were interviewed included both preservice teachers to experienced teachers.

### **Data Collection**

There were 12 K–2 general education teachers that participated in the study. Data were collected through Zoom using the virtual meeting platform and asking interview questions designed to give open-ended responses. I conducted the interviews, which lasted 20-35 minutes. The interviews were both audio recorded and transcribed. The recordings were then downloaded to my computer, which is password-protected. I interviewed the participants somewhere other than the school site during a mutually agreed-upon time after work hours. All interviews were conducted over four weeks. Before the study began, permission was obtained through the IRB of Walden University to conduct the study. The initial contact with the participants was made through the appropriate email associated with the school district. The email contained an explanation of the study, confidentiality procedures, and a response on whether the participant was willing to participate.

The participants who answered “yes” to the email regarding participating in the research study had an email sent with the informed consent form which included the confidentiality and privacy procedures during and after the study. Once the informed consent form was granted, the interview questionnaire was provided to the participant (see Appendix A). The participants were allowed to exit the study at any time. If any

participant decided to exit the study, he or she was asked to let me know that he or she wished to withdraw and, therefore, no longer participated.

### **Data Analysis**

This study involved completing an anonymous, confidential, audio-recorded interview using Zoom's virtual meeting platform. The interviews were downloaded to my computer, which is password-protected. I used the interview guide (see Appendix B) to conduct my interviews. The interviews began with an introduction consisting of open-ended questions for the interviewee that focused on the research questions and ended with a closing. In the introduction, I introduced myself, explained the interview process clearly, and asked the interviewee if he/she had any questions or misunderstandings before getting started. I provided the open-ended questions, and the interviewee provided most of the answers.

In the closing part of the interview protocol, I asked the interviewee if he/she had any additional information he/she would like to provide and thanked the interviewee for their participation in the study. A follow-up question was posed to the interviewee for any response requiring additional information. Once the interviews were downloaded and transcribed to my password-protected computer. I reviewed a typed interview transcript once transcribed to make necessary corrections. The transcribed interview was emailed out to the interviewee. Then, the interviewee communicated with me once more to hear the interpretations I interpreted and had the opportunity to share feedback. All participants agreed that their interview transcript was a precise replication of their interview involvement and that no changes needed to be made.

I analyzed the interviews with the 12 participants using NVivo 14, which is a qualitative data analysis software that helps to analyze, organize, and visualize information collected. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned each interviewee a numeric value (e.g., Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, Interviewee 3). Each interviewee's responses were entered into the NVivo 14 analysis software, and the patterns were noted and analyzed. Using NVivo 14, 35 deductive codes, nine categories, and two themes were generated. The categories and themes presented in Table 1 were created by cautiously inspecting the responses from each interviewee.

**Table 1***Codes, Categories, and Themes*

RQ	Codes	Categories	Theme
1	Effectively Participate and learn Disruptive students Disruptive behaviors Lack of professional development Barriers	Classroom Management Strategies	Managing Classroom Behavior
1	Classroom environment Unprepared Ineffectiveness Emotional exhaustion Evidence-based provisions	Effects of Disruptive Behaviors	
1	Academic and behavioral expectations develop adaptive behaviors Effective instruction Emotional/behavioral disorders Behavioral skills	Evidence- Based Practices	
1	Teaching practices Inclusion Setting Confidence	Teacher Experience	
2	Classroom environment Students removed due to behaviors	Loss of instruction time	Barriers and Facilitators Affecting the Ability to Manage Behaviors in Classrooms
2	Effective strategies Having classroom management Characteristics of good practices School leaders support Limited knowledge Academic opportunities Collaborative planning	Professional Development	
2	Co-teaching Teamwork	Teacher Collaboration	
2	Lack of confidence Lack of control Unprepared	Teacher Efficacy	
2	Being prepared Challenges Behavioral management	Teacher Preparation	

The first theme is managing classroom behaviors. The categories developed from theme one, listed in order from largest to smallest, are evidence-based practices, effects of disruptive behaviors, classroom management strategies, and teaching experiences. The hierarchy chart in Figure 1 illustrates the categories produced from the interviews regarding managing classroom behaviors.

### Figure 1

#### *Hierarchy Chart for Managing Classroom Behaviors*



*Note.* The categories that appeared the most are the larger sections in the hierarchy chart.

The second theme is the barriers and facilitators affecting the ability to manage behaviors and classrooms. The categories developed from theme two, listed from largest to smallest, were professional development, teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, teacher preparation, and loss of instruction time. The hierarchy chart in Figure 2



illustrates the categories that were produced from the interview questions regarding the barriers and facilitators affecting the ability to manage behaviors in classrooms.

## Figure 2

### *Hierarchy Chart for the Barriers and Facilitators*



*Note.* The categories that appeared the most are the larger sections in the hierarchy chart.

## Results

A thematic analysis of interview data was conducted using NVivo 14. The results of the study are described below. The interpretations of the perspectives from 12 K–2 general education teachers were collected and used during the data analysis process. The interview responses were uploaded in NVivo 14. The themes were formed by using the two research questions in the study. The categories were detected by inspecting the contents and sentence structure within the interviewee’s responses. The research

questions and developed themes are presented in Table 2 and discussed in the following sections. A description of the themes and categories is listed in the code book (see Appendix D).

**Table 2**

*Major Themes*

RQ#	Themes	Categories	Frequency
1	Managing classroom behaviors	Classroom management strategies	10
		Effects of disruptive behaviors	12
		Evidence-based practices	6
		Teaching practices	12
2	Barriers and facilitators affecting the ability to manage classroom behaviors	Loss of instruction time	8
		Professional development	12
		Teacher collaboration	7
		Teacher efficacy	10
		Teacher preparation	8

*Note.* Frequency represents how often the category appeared across the 12 interviews.

**Theme 1: Managing Classroom Behaviors**

The first RQ was: What do K-2 teachers believe they need to do to better manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms? K-2 teachers believe they need classroom management strategies, evidence-based practices, and teaching practices to minimize the effects of disruptive behaviors in inclusive classrooms. For this research question, four categories emerged (see Table 1): classroom management strategies, effects of disruptive behaviors, evidence-based practices, and teaching experiences. Ten participants indicated classroom management strategies are needed to manage behaviors in inclusive classrooms. All participants indicated that the effects of disruptive behaviors make it difficult to manage classrooms. Six participants indicated that evidenced-based practices are needed to manage classroom behaviors in inclusive classrooms. All participants also

indicated that teaching practices are needed to create an environment where all students can learn successfully.

***Category 1: Evidence-Based Practices***

The third category established was evidence-based practices. Six participants mentioned a lack of evidence-based practices in managing students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Interviewee 1 stated, “I have spent much time trying to manage students with emotional and behavioral disorders. If I had the appropriate strategies or training, then much instruction would not have been disturbed.” Interviewee 4 stated, “There are times when the SPED teacher or para does not show up to support these students because they were called to help with another student, so I am left with managing the behavior problems and my class.” Interviewee 5 stated:

When a student with emotional and behavioral disorders acts out, and I am unable to get the student calmed down, an administrator comes and removes the student from my classroom, resulting in missing instruction. If I could implement effective strategies that work for this student, the result would not be getting removed from the classroom and missing instruction.

Interviewees 10 and 11 had similar responses regarding evidence-based practices. They indicated that using PBIS is excellent, but not all students “buy-in.” Interviewee 6 stated:

Each situation is unique; however, behavior is almost always a response to something. It is essential to find out what lies beneath the behavior and what is causing it, then use the appropriate practice to address the situation. As a teacher,

I must think about the best practice before addressing the situation, especially with students who have emotional and behavioral disorders.

***Category 2: Effects of Disruptive Behaviors***

The second category established was the effects of disruptive behaviors. All participants indicated that there are effects of disruptive behaviors when students with emotional and behavioral disorders are misbehaving in the classrooms. All interviewees mentioned that loss of instruction caused lowered academic achievement due to disruptive behaviors. Interviewee 2 stated, “When so much time is spent trying to deal and cope with those behaviors, it begins to affect the others’ academic success. So much time is spent managing behaviors instead of teaching the kids, resulting in lost instruction.” Interviewee 4 stated, “Some students do not get their academic lessons due to behaviors disrupting their learning. I do not have the means or the time to fully teach due to constantly being pulled away to deal with behavior.”

Student engagement and motivation are other effects of disruptive behaviors. Interviewees 1, 3, and 5 mentioned student engagement and motivation being an effect of disruptive behaviors. Interviewee 1 stated:

In the beginning, when students with emotional and behavioral disorders are being disruptive, the other students are either scared or nervous. They do not know what to expect or how to take it. The disruption plays a role in their learning and relationship with that student. As the year goes on, the students begin to adapt and learn what triggers the emotional and behavioral student to react negatively, and they try not to trigger the student.

Interviewee 3 stated, “Students also tend to get confused. Some students try to mimic the behaviors due to the emotional and behavioral disorders of students getting rewards. The mimicking increased classroom disruptions.” Interviewee 5 stated, “Usually, the students are shocked and scared if they have never seen that behavior. They tend not to want to interact with that student.”

Another effect of disruptive behaviors that interviewees mentioned is teacher burnout and emotional exhaustion. Interviewee 6 stated, “Not knowing how to handle students with emotional and behavioral disorders properly is nerve-racking. I like to do my job well and like to think that I am, but there are days that I feel like a failure and want to quit.” Interviewee 9 stated:

Some students with emotional and behavioral disorders may react dangerously.

When you come to school every day and are approached by a student who can be dangerous, it is not very comforting. There are some days that I would rather stay home than fight the battle I am walking into daily.

### ***Category 3: Classroom Management Strategies***

The first category established was classroom management strategies. Ten participants indicated the need for classroom management strategies so students can learn in a positive environment. Interviewees 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 10 respond similarly to classroom management strategies. They could benefit from more resources and strategies to help students with social and emotional behavioral disorders in inclusive classrooms. However, they also stated that having another person in the room would be helpful. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model is being executed in the

school where the study was conducted. The PBIS model supports students' academic, social, behavioral, emotional, and mental health.

The teachers have a chart system. If the students are doing excellent throughout the day and making good choices, their magnet or clip moves up the chart. There is no "moving down" the chart. It is meant for only positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement encourages others to do well. Once they get off the chart, they get to go to the office and are posted on the school's social media. Interviewee 5 stated, "Students are encouraged to get off the chart by seeing the sticker system showing how many times they have been off the chart. Students with behavior problems have a "check-in check-out" system." Interviewee 4 stated, "I believe more professional development, more training on emotional and behavioral disorders, and more strategies to implement would be helpful in situations where students are disrupting learning. Just being able to know what the SPED [sic] teachers know." Interviewee 2 stated, "Every situation is different. We need more strategies and guidance on what to do or where to go to help students with emotional and behavioral disorders." Interviewee 9 stated, "Tools are needed to help students self-regulate and manage independently so that the teacher is not interrupted so frequently."

#### ***Category 4: Teaching Experiences***

The fourth category established was teaching experiences. All participants indicated the importance of teacher experiences with managing students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Interviewee 1 stated, "As a beginning teacher, I felt stressed. I did not know how to handle students with emotional disorders. I have a history of getting

students who struggle behaviorally, and with the experience, I feel more comfortable now than before.” Interviewee 2 stated, “The confidence level has grown as I have experienced the different situations.” Interviewee 3 stated, “I have learned how to work with them. Experience has helped me.” Interviewee 4 stated, “The more experience I have, the more experience I get, the more comfortable I become.” Interviewee 9 stated, “Experience has given me the skills and exposure I need to help manage students with emotional and behavioral disorders. However, I would like more formal, structured directions on how to handle certain situations.” Interviewee 12 stated, “The experience that I have gained from teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders has taught me the importance of classroom structure and developing procedures to help eliminate disruptive behaviors from occurring.”

## **Theme 2: Barriers and Facilitators Affecting the Ability to Manage Classroom Behaviors**

The second RQ was: What barriers and facilitators do K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom? K–2 teachers describe the loss of instruction time, professional development, teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, and teacher preparation as barriers affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. For this research question, five categories emerged (refer back to Table 1): loss of instruction time, professional development, teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, and teacher preparation. All participants indicated that professional development was a barrier to managing classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms. Ten participants indicated that teacher efficacy is critical in classroom management for

student success. Eight participants indicated that loss of instruction time and teacher preparation was a barrier to managing classroom behaviors. Seven participants indicated that teacher collaboration is another barrier that affects the ability to manage classroom behaviors in the inclusive setting.

#### ***Category 5: Professional Development***

The second category for RQ1 was professional development. All interviewees acknowledged professional development as a need. Most interviewees mentioned needing more training and professional development during their college years and work experience. Interviewee 2 stated, “Personal experience is all I have. I have not had any training. What I know is what I have experienced.” Interviewee 3 stated:

After 24 years of teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders, I have become accustomed to them. It just becomes normal for me. It does not take away my love for teaching. I have learned how to work with them. My experience over the years has helped me. As a new teacher, not having the experience and all the tricks in your back pocket would be hard.

#### ***Category 6: Teacher Collaboration***

The third category for RQ1 was teacher collaboration. Seven participants indicated teacher collaboration as a facilitator. Interviewee 1 stated:

In the past, I have asked for an extra set of hands in advance if a particular student runs away while participating in a fun outside activity. If I need a SPED [sic] teacher to co-teach, that teacher tries to be present and makes time to help. Collaboration is the key.



Interviewees 2, 3, 8, 9, and 10 responded similarly. They indicated that collaboration with the school's special education teachers and other support staff who have experience managing students with emotional and behavioral disorders is beneficial and meaningful. Interviewee 6 stated, "I collaborate with the MTSS coordinator regarding students involved in MTSS. There is a team and collaborative effort to be sure their needs are met."

### ***Category 7: Teacher Efficacy***

The fourth category for RQ1 was teacher efficacy. Ten participants indicated teacher efficacy as a barrier to managing classroom behaviors. Interviewee 1 stated:

I get nervous. I do the best I can. I have a history of getting a few students with emotional and behavioral disorders every year or every other year. I am known to be able to manage them and their behaviors. As a beginning teacher, I felt super stressed. It was hard because I was trying to learn everything. When you throw a student in the mix that has a behavior disorder, it can cause some stress and doubt. I had some introductory coteaching courses, but overall, I had no training in college on how to deal with students with emotional behavioral disorders.

Interviewee 2 stated, "The level of confidence has grown from year to year as I have experienced different situations." Interviewee 4 stated, "It is always a level of "what am I walking into today"? The unknown is discomfoting, but the more experience I have from year to year, the more I feel more comfortable teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders." Interviewee 5 stated, "I feel like I am comfortable. I have not taught a student that is so severe that they are physical with me. I know that sometimes

you cannot fight fire with fire. You must change directions to diffuse a situation.”

Interviewee 7 stated, “I have had several years where I have at least one who is tough. Seventeen years of teaching them, and I am worn out. It is uncomfortable knowing that they may react dangerously.” Interviewees 3, 6, 8, 9, and 10 responded similarly. They indicated that their level of confidence in teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders is minimal.

### ***Category 8: Teacher Preparation***

The fifth category for RQ1 was teacher preparation. Eight participants indicated teacher preparation as a barrier to managing classroom behaviors. Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 shared similar responses. They indicated a need for evidence-based practices to be implemented to accommodate students with emotional and behavioral disorders to support positive behavior interventions and self-management practices. Interviewee 3 stated:

An administrator will come in and remove a student if needed. With a child with behavior issues, we try to find things they can do in the room to help de-escalate. Sometimes, it is up to the teacher to see what sets them off and calm them down. We need more teachers who are restraint trained, especially having kids who need it in your classroom. Teachers need to be trained to manage students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Interviewee 7 stated, “With a lack of training and experience, the administration has to remove students consistently from my classroom so instruction can continue.”

### *Category 9: Loss of Instruction Time*

The first category established was loss of instruction time. Eight participants mentioned the loss of instruction time. Participants indicated that a lot of instruction time is lost when a student's behavior is disruptive, and all teaching must stop. Interviewee 1 stated:

We miss much instructional time when a student is being disruptive. If I am teaching a small group, I may have to be removed from the small group table to address issues with the student acting out. By the time an administrator can come and remove the student, a whole group or small group session is lost. I make up lost instruction, but it is a condensed version at times. They all miss out on learning.

Interviewee 2 stated, "If it is a small hindrance, then the students usually learn to ignore the behavior. They find it hard to focus and concentrate if it is an extreme behavior, such as throwing and kicking. It begins to affect the students academically. Behaviors take the time away from the teacher teaching". Interviewees 3, 4, 5, and 6 had similar responses. They indicated that loss of instruction begins to affect the others' academic success due to time spent managing behaviors instead of teaching the kids. Interviewees 10 and 12 indicated that the classes' academic success declines when the behaviors disrupt the instruction, and the teacher cannot teach because of constantly being pulled away to deal with the behavior. Interviewees 7, 8, 9, and 11 mentioned that having a para or support staff in the classroom allowed teaching to continue while the teacher handled the behavior issue.

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

### Credibility

Credibility was provided to guarantee that the data collection was properly accumulated during this research study. The study results presented K–2 teachers' perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. The interviews were conducted according to the data collection procedures outlined in Chapter 3. The interviews were downloaded to my computer, which is password-protected. As the researcher, I collected the data and explored it truthfully. The credible data is an accurate illustration of the participants and their experiences. I maintained a contextual relationship with all participants.

The triangulation method was used in this research by receiving several perspectives from different sources. I was able to obtain an understanding of the phenomena by merging separate approaches on the perspectives of K–2 teachers. To triangulate data, I equated findings from the different interviews on the perspectives of having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom.

The credibility of this study was determined when data saturation was met. Data saturation is met when no additional issues or insights are recognized, and data begins to replicate itself and becomes redundant (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Data saturation addressed this qualitative research's quality, trustworthiness, and credibility. Quality is

the rigor and validity of the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The quality of research provides ethical evidence, is vigorous, and can be used to advise. Different measures were used to collect and explore the data.

### **Transferability**

Transferability was confirmed by conducting the research by sharing the exclusion and inclusion criteria and descriptive data. This study can be duplicated by other researchers. This study could be applied to other school environments. It may be beneficial to implement this study in an elementary school environment with a different or similar subgroups (e.g., Other Health Impairment disorders). The findings from this study may provide administrators with teachers' perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what they believe they need to do to improve their skills to manage these students' challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms. This research may also provide teachers with effective, research-based, and high-quality coaching to manage students' challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms and provide them with what they need to improve their abilities to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms resulting in positive social change.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to data consistency. Dependability is ensured by being consistent in collecting the data. All research notes, materials, data management, and sampling can be accessed in the future by anyone wanting to audit the study to confirm. In my study, data saturation was influenced by consistency. I incorporated constant methods of data collection with all participants. The questions asked were the same for

each semi-structured qualitative interview. The protection of the participants was consistent and maintained to ensure the viability of the data collected.

### **Confirmability**

The final approach in confirming trustworthiness was conformability. Conformability is imitated by the researcher when exemplifying that the conclusion and results were derived directly from the data (Kakar et al., 2023). To help improve the neutrality of the research, direct quotes from the interviewees were included. Neutrality is the degree of fairness of results, free from bias. Confirmability is authenticated by checking and rechecking the collection and analysis of the data.

### **Summary**

This basic qualitative study aimed to explore K–2 teachers’ perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. I conducted interviews to obtain my qualitative analysis. From the two research questions, I had two themes that emerged from the data collected during the interviews.

For RQ1, the major theme was managing classroom behaviors. The four categories that emerged were evidence-based practices, effects of disruptive behaviors, classroom management strategies, and teaching experiences. All participants indicated that the effects of disruptive behaviors make it difficult to manage classrooms. They also indicated that teaching practices are needed to create an environment where all students can learn successfully.

For RQ2, the major theme is barriers and facilitators affecting the ability to manage classroom behaviors. The five categories were professional development, teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, teacher preparation, and loss of instruction time. All participants indicated that professional development was a barrier to managing classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms.

In Chapter 4, I revealed the results of my study in detail. The data was collected by interviewing 12 participants who were K–2 general education teachers. In Chapter 5, I will interpret my findings and describe the limitations of trustworthiness, recommendations for further research, the potential impact of social change, and methodological implications.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This research study aimed to explore K–2 teachers’ perspectives on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. Data were collected through interview questions designed to accumulate open-ended responses. The phenomenon was analyzed through the CICCFC. The logical connections between the CICCFC and this qualitative study were removing barriers and effectively enabling all students to participate and learn within a general education setting.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The K–2 teachers in this study have seen their behavior management skills overwhelmed due to the increased number of students with disabilities in their classroom who display emotional/behavioral challenges. Gonzales- Ball and Bratton (2019) indicated that teachers are not sufficiently trained in addressing children’s emotional and behavioral needs. Yassine et al. (2020) stated that to have behavioral success in an inclusion classroom, the implementation of socially valid classroom-based interventions is critical. A basic qualitative study was conducted to obtain the perspectives of K–2 general education teachers on having a broad range of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms and what barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom.

Bosch and Ellis (2021) mentioned that training teachers in behavior management has been found by researchers to increase self-efficacy in implementing strategies with



behavior management. An individual's experience determines the attitude they present in each situation. In the education world, teachers' attitudes matter when making educational improvements. Teachers who are ready and prepared will present positive attitudes, whereas teachers who are not prepared or ready will have negative attitudes (Alsarawi & Sukonthaman, 2023). The research questions addressed the importance of teacher preparation and self-efficacy, evidence-based practices for classroom management, professional development, teacher collaboration, and the effects of disruptive behaviors.

Once the data from the interviews were collected and organized, it was found that the K-2 teachers in the study described loss of instruction time, professional development, teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, and teacher preparation as barriers affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom. All interviewees indicated that the lack of professional development was a barrier to managing classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms. Educators feel underprepared to uphold academic engagement and, at the same time, prevent and reduce student behaviors that are disruptive in the classroom (Sims et al., 2023). Interviewees 3, 4, 5, and 6 specified that loss of instruction affects the others' academic success due to time spent managing behaviors instead of teaching the kids. All interviewees acknowledged professional development as a need to better manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms. Interviewees 2, 3, 8, 9, and 10 responded similarly. They indicated that collaboration with the school's special education teachers and other support staff who have experience managing students with emotional and behavioral disorders is beneficial and meaningful. Interviewees 3, 6, 8, 9, and 10

indicated that their level of confidence in teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders is minimal.

K–2 teachers believe they need classroom management strategies, evidence-based teaching practices to minimize the effects of disruptive behaviors in inclusive classrooms. Poorly taught classroom management strategies limit the learning outcomes of students (Hepburn & Beamish, 2020). Past research supported that novice teachers felt disappointed with their teacher preparation in classroom management, and nearly half of novice teachers felt somewhat or unprepared in their first year of teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Conner et al. (2022) indicated that teachers feel they are spending a lot of time dealing with disruptive behaviors rather than concentrating on student achievement. All participants in this study indicated that the effects of disruptive behaviors make it difficult to manage classrooms. All participants also indicated that teaching practices are needed to create an environment where all students can learn successfully. Six participants indicated that evidenced-based practices are needed to manage classroom behaviors in inclusive classrooms. Further, 10 participants indicated classroom management strategies are needed to manage behaviors in inclusive classrooms. When disruptive behaviors take place in the classroom, teachers are sending them to the office. They are either sent home or placed in another classroom for the day. When this happens, behaviors are not addressed in meaningful ways, and students lose significant classroom instructional time (Conner et al., 2022).

Students with EBD show inappropriate behaviors, poor interpersonal relationships, and academic problems (Soares et al., 2022). The difficulties of teaching

EBD students in a general education setting are numerous. When working with EBD students, teachers and paraprofessionals need to communicate and collaborate to support the students and one another. It is paramount for teachers and support staff to have the ability to communicate, coordinate, and deliver the support needed for EBD students to meet their complex needs in an inclusive classroom (Bronstein et al., 2022). When general and special education teachers collaborate, an inclusive learning community is created, and students have support to succeed. Research has also indicated that teachers have reported the need for professional development in teaching students with special education needs (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). Conroy et al. (2019) found that teachers who received practical professional development training were able to improve their classroom management with students with emotional and behavioral issues.

Based upon the research and literature review, I assumed that since the start of the full inclusion movement, K–2 general education teachers have seen their behavior management skills overwhelmed due to the increased numbers of students with disabilities who display emotional/behavioral challenges in their classrooms. More and more, students with emotional disorders are being placed in the regular education classroom (McKenna et al., 2022). Students with emotional disorders need specialized teaching, interventions, and support to improve their social, behavioral, and academic skills (Mithell et al., 2019). In the education system, there are concerns about prioritizing educational placement over access to support, specialized services, and inclusion for students with skill deficits (Mitchell et al., 2019).

Teachers who teach students with EBD have limited resources to support the needs of EBD students. Finkelstein et al. (2021) stated that it is important to understand what high-quality inclusive practices are and ‘if’ and ‘how’ they are being used. Collaboration and teamwork among teaching teams, students’ families, the use of specialist and paraprofessionals, and connections with community institutions and agencies are teaching practices that should be implemented to support the needs of EBD students (Finkelstein et al., 2021). Effective preparation in implementing inclusive education programs is a significant challenge that schools encounter (Siddik et al., 2020). The categories and themes resulting from the interviews support the findings and interpretations connected to prior research.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were some limitations presented in the study. One limitation of this study was social desirability bias. The teachers were asked questions that were focused on a sensitive topic. Some participants hesitated to answer the interview questions, which made them feel there was only one correct answer. I assured each participant that their responses were kept confidential. As such, the credible data are an accurate illustration of the participants and their experiences.

Another challenge was recruitment. For one, the grade range for the study was small. Successful recruitment and retention of participants was needed for the research study to be successful. Scope is also a factor. As such, the perceptions of K–2 teachers on what they believe they need to do better to manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms may not be the same perceptions from grades 3–12 teachers. Similarly, the

barriers and facilitators K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom may not be the same barriers and facilitators grades 3–12 teachers have.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of the information from the present study, one recommendation that may have the potential to enhance classroom management is to explore how teachers can be better equipped for managing classroom behaviors. Administrators can look at what classroom management strategies and interventions for reducing disruptions and misbehaviors are available. I would recommend that administrators provide teachers with a one-day training on classroom management strategies and interventions to help with responding to misbehaviors. The results of the study could also help create professional development that focuses more on students who have emotional and behavioral disorders and provide effective, research-based, and of high quality coaching.

### **Implications**

Despite the limitations of this study, the results presented a significant implication for other organizations struggling with managing classroom behaviors. Providing professional development to teachers on how to effectively teach students with challenging behaviors is needed for academic performance. Teachers face a lot of stress due to their daily teaching tasks, a more diverse student population, reduced school funding, and higher accountability measures (Smith et al., 2018). Smith et al. (2018) stated that to keep teachers and help them have a successful career, it's important to offer professional development, support, and opportunities for rejuvenation. Classroom

management strategies, evidence-based practices, and teaching practices are needed to minimize the effects of disruptive behaviors in inclusive classrooms. Hepburn et al. (2019) identified that many new teachers are not ready for the emotional aspect of handling student behaviors and relationships. Even before finishing their undergraduate education, pre-service teachers can experience burnout (Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019). That is why it would make sense to incorporate some professional development aspects into teachers' pre-service education too. Professional development has the potential to boost teacher motivation, which in turn can help reduce teacher burnout as it can also help them gain confidence and reduce stress (Peterson & Baule, 2023). This study can lead to positive social change by informing the provision of effective, research-based, and high-quality coaching to help teachers manage students' challenging behaviors in inclusive classrooms and provide them with what they need to improve their abilities to manage classroom behavior.

### **Conclusion**

Classroom management plays a vital role in a learner's classroom achievement. It involves establishing and sustaining the classroom environment to meet learning goals and opportunities. Teachers believe they need classroom management strategies, evidence-based practices, and teaching practices to minimize the effects of disruptive behaviors in inclusive classrooms. Students with emotional behavior disorders can disrupt the learning environment if the teacher is not equipped with the resources or materials needed to manage them. The loss of instruction time, professional development,

teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, and teacher preparation are barriers affecting teachers' ability to manage behaviors in inclusive classroom settings.

The difficulties of teaching EBD students in a general education setting are abundant. When working with EBD students, teachers and paraprofessionals need to communicate and collaborate to support the students and one another. It is paramount for teachers and support staff to have the ability to collaborate and deliver the support needed for EBD students to meet their complex needs in an inclusive classroom setting. Self-efficacy in an inclusive environment is higher, with teachers trained in special education and receiving professional development. When general and special education teachers collaborate, an inclusive learning community is created, and students can succeed. For effective inclusion to happen, professional development and teacher preparation needs to occur.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

**Interview Questionnaire**

## Open Ended Questions

**RQ1:** What do K–2 teachers believe they need to do to better manage classroom behavior in inclusive classrooms?

1. How do you manage classroom behaviors in your classroom?
2. Can you describe your experience teaching students with behavioral issues?
3. How do you address the needs of students with behavioral disorders?
4. How do the other students in the class react when there are behavioral management issues?
5. How would you describe the class's' academic success when there are behavioral management issues?
6. How comfortable are you with teaching students with behavior problems?

**RQ2:** What barriers and facilitators do K–2 teachers describe as affecting their ability to manage behaviors in the classroom?

7. What kinds of resources are provided for you to use to help with managing classroom behaviors in an inclusive classroom?
8. Do you feel as if you could benefit with more resources or strategies to help with managing classroom behaviors in an inclusive classroom? If yes, can you elaborate?
9. Is there some kind of training that might help you manage classroom behaviors?
10. Do you feel that you are supported by your administrators in your school in managing classroom behaviors?
11. How would you describe your training to meet the needs of students with disabilities?
12. What efforts do you make to ensure that students with disabilities achieve academically and behaviorally?
13. Why are these efforts important to ensure the success of the inclusion classroom model?
14. Do you collaborate with others to provide the necessary instruction needed for students with disabilities?



## Appendix B: Interview Guide

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee's coded number: \_\_\_\_\_

Remind interviewee of the purpose of the study and process for data collection. Verbally review the informed consent and confidentiality agreement. Prepare and test digital recorder, review the process with the interviewee including note taking. Ask the participant if there are any questions prior to beginning the interview. Answer any questions or concerns, indicate the beginning of the interview, start the recorder, and begin the interview. For any response requiring additional information, a follow up question will be posed to the interviewee.

1. How do you manage classroom behaviors in your classroom?
2. Can you describe your experience teaching students with behavioral issues?
3. How do you address the needs of students with behavioral disorders?
4. How do the other students in the class react when there are behavioral management issues?
5. How would you describe the class's' academic success when there are behavioral management issues?
6. How comfortable are you with teaching students with behavior problems?
7. What kinds of resources are provided for you to use to help with managing classroom behaviors in an inclusive classroom?
8. Do you feel as if you could benefit with more resources or strategies to help with

managing classroom behaviors in an inclusive classroom? If yes, can you elaborate?

9. Is there some kind of training that might help you manage classroom behaviors?

10. Do you feel that you are supported by your administrators in your school in managing classroom behaviors?

11. How would you describe your training to meet the needs of students with disabilities?

12. What efforts do you make to ensure that students with disabilities achieve academically and behaviorally?

13. Why are these efforts important to ensure the success of the inclusion classroom model?

14. Do you collaborate with others to provide the necessary instruction needed for students with disabilities?

Possible follow prompts and questions, if needed:

What might you add to explain that further?

What examples do you have for this?

What did you mean by.....?

Tell me more about....

You mentioned....

## Appendix C: Code Book

## Codes

<b>Barriers and Facilitators Affecting the Ability to Manage Behaviors in Classrooms</b>	There are several barriers and facilitators affecting the ability to manage behaviors in the classrooms. These barriers and facilitators consist of loss of instructional time, professional development, teacher collaboration, teacher efficacy, and teacher preparation.
Loss of Instructional Time	The amount of instruction that is lost during which learners receive instruction from a classroom teacher in a school or a virtual context.
Professional Development	Professional development in how to manage students with social and emotional behavior disorders consist of gaining new skills through continuing education and career training after entering the workforce.
Teacher Collaboration	Teacher collaboration happens when educators work together to create innovative lesson plans, discuss concerns about student achievement or behavior, determine student progress and challenges, and offer collegial support and encouragement in a structured environment.
Teacher Efficacy	Teacher efficacy is the level of confidence teachers have in their ability to guide students to success. This includes helping students learn, building effective programs for students, and effectively changing student learning.
Teacher Preparation	Teacher preparation consist of preparing teachers to successfully instruct students.
<b>Managing Classroom Behaviors</b>	The ability to manage classroom behaviors is grounded on classroom management strategies, evidenced-based practices, and teacher experiences. When students with emotional and behavior disorders are not managed properly, the disruptive behaviors influence the students in the classroom.
Classroom Management Strategies	Strategies used to manage classroom environments so students can learn in a positive environment.
Effects of Disruptive Behaviors	Disruptive behaviors in the classroom can have many negative effects. The effects can consist of lost instructional time, lowered academic achievement for all students, decreased student engagement and motivation, teacher stress, and teacher turnover.
Evidenced-Based Practices	Evidence-Based Practices consist of skills, techniques, and strategies that have been proven to work through experimental research studies or large-scale research field studies.
Teaching Experience	Teacher experience is the culmination of skills, exposure or training acquired over time that enables you to perform an existing job better or prepare you for a teaching position.