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Elementary Teacher Usage of Daily Behavior Report Cards With Students With Disabilities

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Walden University

College of Education

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Patrika K. Brown

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Elementary Teacher Usage of Daily Behavior Report Cards With Students With

Disabilities

by

Patrika K. Brown

MA, Columbia College, 2016

BS, Stephens College, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

Elementary teachers in a school district in a mid-western state were struggling to manage classrooms with students with disabilities. Additionally, there is a gap in practice in which some teachers do not use daily behavior report cards (DBRC), or use them without fidelity, despite the effectiveness of DBRC with various groups. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore how elementary teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities to manage their behaviors. Guided by Canter’s assertive discipline model, an exploration of how elementary teachers in a mid-western school district used DBRC to support the behavior management of students with disabilities. An exploration occurred on how teachers created rules and expectations and provided positive reinforcement and repetition when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. Qualitative exploratory research was used to interview 10 elementary teachers within the focus school district. Transcripts from the interviews were thematically coded for information about how teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities. Findings indicated that teachers used DBRC to (a) change student behaviors through faded supports leading into student self-awareness, (b) establish consistent school-based rules and expectations, and (c) fade the type and frequency of interest-based reinforcement by providing repetition in the daily routine and feedback. Implications for positive social change included improving the classroom climate of elementary school classrooms, which may lead to a decrease in teacher burnout and an acceptance of diverse individuals.

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Dedication

To the almighty God, who receives all of the glory for this accomplishment. To my nana, who reminded me and everyone that she met that I was going to be “Dr. Brown.” To my parents and step-parents, I thank all of you for believing in me, even when times got weary. To my partner and our little blessings, you have sacrificed the most, for that, I am humbled and grateful. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Tray W. Rodgers III. I will never forget you.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been possible without the dedication of the dissertation committee. Throughout this journey, Dr. Stephanie A. Gaddy encouraged me to run my doctoral race. She helped me navigate through jumbled thoughts to create doctoral-level work. Her tenacity and no-nonsense advice helped me to keep pressing forward. I am grateful for my second committee member, Dr. Jonah Eleweke. His works with deaf education inspired me to continue to work to achieve social change for students with disabilities. A special thanks to Anne Rojas, at the Walden Library, for helping me to locate research articles. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Jennifer Rounds-Bryant for mentoring me through my prospectus revisions. Without her knowledge, I probably would still be trying to discern what a theoretical/conceptual framework was.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Research was required to explore effective management strategies that teachers could apply to all elementary classrooms with students with disabilities. One management strategy identified in the research to be effective in minimizing negative behaviors in the classroom was daily behavior report cards (DBRC; Kunemund, Majeika, De La Cruz, & Wilkinson, 2016). DBRC is school-to-home notes that provide families with detailed information about student behavior in the classroom (Goldman, Sanderson, Lloyd, & Barton, 2019). DBRC was initially a component of the Check-in/Check-out (CICO) intervention, a multi-tiered system of support used to manage students' behavioral needs (Bunch-Crump & Lo, 2017).

In Chapter 1, the behavior management problem is defined, and the background information related to the use of the DBRC intervention to solve that problem is discussed. Information about why the study was significant to the special education world is also presented. The limitations, assumptions, delimitations are included in Chapter 1. The research questions and conceptual framework that guided the study, along with the relevant key definitions, are also provided.

Background

Much of the research about DBRC included effectively combining the intervention with other types of interventions to manage specific behaviors presented in the classroom that may or may not be disability-related. Ross and Sabey (2015) combined the

CICO intervention, including the DBRC component, with social skills training, and the combination improved the social engagement level of participants with social skills deficits.

McDaniel, Houchins, and Robinson (2016) found that when combined with a behavior coach, DBRC improved both behavior and educational growth for students diagnosed with an emotional and behavioral disorder. McDaniel et al. (2018) combined DBRC with a cognitive-behavior intervention to decrease the effects of externalizing behavior. Overall, past research about DBRC indicated that the intervention has decreased the prevalence of negative social interactions (Taylor & Hill, 2017), improved overall behavior, and academic growth, and decreased the prevalence of externalizing behaviors (Iznardo, Rogers, Volpe, Labelle, & Robaey, 2017). Additional current research about DBRC focused on the effects of the intervention on specific disabilities.

Researchers have established DBRC as an evidence-based intervention to support the behavior needs of students with specific disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders (ASD), developmental disabilities, and attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD). Witmer, Nasamran, Parikh, Schmitt, and Clinton (2015) conducted a literature review on intervention research for students withASD, where the results indicated that DBRC is an effective intervention for improving the presence of ASD related behaviors in the classroom. Taylor and Hill (2017) extended the DBRC research by studying the effects of the intervention on the pro-social behaviors of six and seven-year-olds diag-

nosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Because of the Taylor and Hill study, the pro-social behavior of all four participants improved.

In contrast to Witmer et al. (2015), Taylor and Hill (2017) conducted a DBRC intervention with younger students during the extended school year. Witmer et al. only conducted a literature review of existing research at that time. However, Taylor and Hill and Witmer et al. identified that DBRC could improve classroom behaviors for students with various disabilities. Iznardo et al. (2017) and Pyle and Fabiano (2017) conducted meta-analyses where the results supported the DBRC as an effective behavioral intervention. Iznardo et al. examined group-design studies that included DBRC as a single intervention. Pyle and Fabiano examined single-case studies where teachers may or may not have used DBRC in combination with other interventions. Iznardo et al. indicated that DBRC reduced the frequency and severity of externalizing behaviors. Pyle and Fabiano extended Iznardo et al.'s results by specifying the externalizing behaviors as being off-task and disruptive. Both Pyle and Fabiano and Iznardo et al. suggested that future research focuses on how teachers structured DBRC.

Karhu, Närhi, and Savolainen (2018) sought to decrease the externalizing behaviors of students with ADHD by analyzing the effects of DBRC combined with a school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) program. Karhu et al. extended Iznardo et al. (2017) and Pyle and Fabiano's (2017) research by examining the maintenance of positive effects after removing the DBRC intervention. After the DBRC intervention was removed, some participants maintained their positive behavior, and some

referred back to their disruptive behavior (Pyle & Fabiano, 2017). Karhu et al. suggested that future research focus on positive teacher and student interaction after the removal of the DBRC intervention.

Many researchers suggested that future research on DBRC should include the teacher's usage of the intervention (Pyle & Fabiano, 2017). DBRC was effective in minimizing disruptive behaviors and enhancing on-task behaviors in the classroom when teachers implemented them with fidelity (Riden, Taylor, Lee, & Scheeler, 2018; Taylor & Hill, 2017). Wolfe et al. (2016) found that DBRC was most effective when the function of the problem behavior was obtaining adult attention. Therefore, Wolfe et al. suggested that future research focus on how adults maintain positive results of DBRC. Riden et al. extended Wolfe et al.'s suggestion by adding that future research should focus on the barriers to implementing DBRC with fidelity.

Problem Statement

There is a gap in practice in which some elementary teachers do not use DBRC, or use them without fidelity, despite the effectiveness of DBRC with various groups (Riden et al., 2018). Moore, Whittaker, and Ford (2016) have confirmed that more information was needed on how some elementary teachers successfully used DBRC to manage classrooms with students with disabilities. More specifically, research was needed on how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with their students with disabilities (Iznardo et al., 2017). Without the current study, elementary teachers in a school district in a mid-western state may have continued to struggle with managing classrooms

with students with disabilities, further affecting a positive classroom culture and the potential for educational success (Farmer et al., 2018). Research indicates that DBRC had some success in addressing parts of the gap in practice. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how elementary teachers used DBRC to manage classrooms with students with disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

The qualitative exploratory research methodology was used to determine how special and general education elementary teachers used DBRC to improve the behaviors of students with disabilities in a mid-western school district. Research questions centered on how kindergarten through fifth-grade (K-5) teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to explore how elementary teachers utilized specific components of Canter's (1976) assertive discipline program combined with DBRC as part of a comprehensive behavior management plan for students with disabilities.

Research Questions

Behavior management of students with disabilities was a critical topic to be studied because it had a substantial impact on academic growth, positive learning environment, and teacher job satisfaction (Myers, Freeman, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2017). There was a need for research on how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities as part of their overall pre-determined behavior management plan. A special education leader in a mid-western school district agreed that their

district was also dealing with elementary teachers who were struggling to manage classrooms with students with disabilities. At the same time, some elementary teachers in the school district were successful in using DBRC (Personal communication, October 9, 2018).

Central Research Question: How do elementary teachers in a mid-western school district use DBRC to support the behavior management of students with disabilities?

Subquestion 1: How do elementary teachers create rules and expectations when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?

Subquestion 2: How do elementary teachers provide positive reinforcement and repetition when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?

Conceptual Framework

Canter's (1976) assertive discipline program was the conceptual framework for this study. Assertive discipline was a behavior regulation plan that combined assertiveness training with behavioral therapy (Canter, 1976). Canter (1989) asserted that effective classroom management was a result of a teacher's pre-planned decision making. The current study was based on the principles of assertive discipline, which included establishing clear rules and expectations and providing positive reinforcement and repetition (see Canter, 1989). Both components were key concepts in the assertive discipline program and structuring and administering DBRC. Cressey (2019) explained that PBIS were derived from the same behaviorist theories that assertive discipline was derived. Therefore, studies that used behaviorist approaches, such as PBIS and assertive discipline, were rel-

evant to the framework of the current study and were classified underneath the general category of assertive discipline research.

The concept that framed the current study was that a teacher's pre-planned decisions about the use of DBRC for students with disabilities were a part of a more comprehensive behavior management plan. Current research about assertive discipline included using the program to understand global behavior management decision making better. Much of the current research on assertive discipline included exploring teacher perceptions, pre-service learning, and reducing disruptive behavior (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016). Current research using PBIS and other behaviorist-derived theories were used to improve overall school discipline (Gage, Grasley-Boy, Peshak George, Childs, & Kincaid, 2019). Research using assertive discipline with students with disabilities in the school setting specifically was popular during the 1990s. However, it has since been replaced with an exploration of school-wide implementations of PBIS. Most of the current research on assertive discipline explicitly is conducted outside of the United States.

Each of the study's research questions was designed to test a key construct of the assertive discipline program. The central research question focused on the overall usage of DBRC to manage classrooms with students with disabilities. The first subsequent question was designed to understand how elementary teachers pre-established rules and expectations before implementing DBRC. The second subsequent research question was

designed to understand the role that positive reinforcement and repetition played in the structuring and administering process of using DBRC.

According to Canter (1988), a teacher achieves effective behavior management when they take time to develop a plan and not when a teacher mastered a set of specific skills. Qualitative exploratory research was used to understand how elementary teachers have socially constructed their experiences with developing behavior management plans with a DBRC component. More specifically, the interview questions were created to explore how elementary teachers adhered to the concepts of assertive discipline while using DBRC with students with disabilities. Data analysis included using thematic coding to explore how elementary teachers used the relevant constructs of assertive discipline to structure and administer DBRC with students with disabilities.

Nature of the Study

The focus of the current study was to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC, a behavior-management intervention, with students with disabilities. The nature of this dissertation was qualitative exploratory methodology because the research questions included exploring the processes that elementary teachers went through when they structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The qualitative exploratory methodology was used to explore how the participants have socially constructed a phenomenon (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The focus of the present study was to explore how elementary teachers have

socially constructed their experiences with structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities.

The proposed sample size was 10 teachers from five elementary schools in a focus district. The data collected from the interviews were then analyzed to identify emergent themes of how elementary teachers used DBRC to manage classrooms with students with disabilities (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The member checking method, as described by Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016), was used to assure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability during the interviews. Additional information about the research methodology is described in Chapter 3.

Definitions

The following definitions pertaining to the research study are provided to assist the reader.

Assertive discipline: a classroom management plan that includes the teacher providing pre-determined rules and concrete instructions to increase appropriate behavior (Lopez Kershen, Weiner, & Torres, 2018; Simonsen et al., 2019)

Behavior management: how teachers use positive interventions to deal with misbehavior (Sørlie, Ogden, & Olseth, 2016).

Check-in/Check-out (CICO): an intervention used to decrease the prevalence of internalized and externalized problem behaviors (Laging, Buerger, Hoekstra, & Childs, 2018).

Classroom management: "(a) active instruction and supervision of students (i.e., teaching), (b) opportunities for students to respond, and (c) feedback to students" (Gage, Scott, Hirn, & MacSuga-Gage, 2018, p. 302).

Daily behavior report cards (DBRC): a behavior management intervention that includes an individualized rating scale form that combines student behavioral feedback with home-school collaboration to improve student behavior in both settings (Bunch-Crump & Lo, 2017).

Elementary school: the mid-western school district defines elementary school as K-5.

General education: the classroom that includes non-disabled students, into which many students with disabilities are integrated (Scott, 2017).

Positive reinforcement: providing the student with "praise and physical attention" to encourage acceptable behavior (Foley, Dozier, & Lessor, 2019, p. 90).

Special education: differentiated instruction created to meet the needs of the student with a disability that differs from the general education curriculum (Bateman, Lloyd, & Tankersley, 2015; Cooc, 2018).

Student with a disability: an individual with "impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions" that reflect "the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives" (World Health Organization, 2015, para. 1).

Assumptions

The purpose of the proposed study was to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. One assumption was that the participants were qualified to inform me about how they structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. It was also assumed that elementary teachers provided accurate and honest answers during the interview. The role as a special education teacher in the school district may have resulted in previous contact with participants that were not related to the use of DBRC. However, elementary teachers who worked in the same elementary school were not recruited as participants for the current study. Previous experiences with the DBRC intervention may have resulted in some personal biases about how to structure and administer DBRC with students with disabilities. However, the use of bracketing, or identifying preconceived notions, helped to counteract threats to the validity of the study (see Moustakas, 1994). It was assumed that the only reward for the completion of this study was the reward of earning a doctoral degree.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was limited to the exploration of how elementary educators in a midwestern school district structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. Data collection included interviewing general education and special education elementary teachers who used DBRC and who were employed at the time of the study or were previously employed in the mid-western school district. The focus of this dissertation was specific to elementary schools, as it is during this time that students are learning about ap-

propriate behavior in the school setting (Caldarella, Williams, Hansen, & Wills, 2015). Elementary teachers within this school district had similar demographics, which may have caused the results to be less generalizable to other school districts.

The delimitations of this study included elementary teachers who have never used DBRC with students with disabilities or any middle school or high school teachers within the mid-western school district. In order to be considered for participation in the study, elementary school teachers must have formerly used or were using DBRC with students with disabilities at the time of the study. Elementary teachers who worked in the school in which I teach were not included in this study. Many other behavior management components could have been considered, including classroom procedures, teacher/student relationships, the physical structure of the learning environment, classroom culture, and discipline procedures. However, the current study was delimited only to include rules, expectations, positive reinforcement, and repetition because those are the key constructs of Canter’s (1976) assertive discipline program, and other behaviorist approaches, which was the conceptual base for the study.

Limitations

Limitations of this study involved interviewing only those elementary teachers who used a specific type of intervention, DBRC, with students with disabilities. Teachers of sixth- through twelfth-graders may have used this intervention with students with disabilities, but their viewpoints were not considered. The same school district employed the elementary teacher-participants. Therefore, the experiences of elementary teachers from

other districts or states were not included in the findings of this study. As the researcher, I am a special education teacher within the school district and have used the DBRC intervention; this indicated there was a potential for bias. In this study, I used only qualitative data that was not triangulated with quantitative data as a measurement of ensuring validity (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). The effectiveness of DBRC was not measured quantitatively; although, teacher's opinions about its effectiveness were expressed during the interviews.

Significance

This study was significant because it focused on exploring how general education and special education teachers structured and administered DBRC for students with disabilities. It was essential to explore behavior interventions that may help to reduce the prevalence of problem behaviors in the classroom. The results of the current study could provide the mid-western school district with information on how their elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. The knowledge of this process could potentially act as a catalyst for future research or educational practice, thus bringing about social change. Through this study, elementary teachers may have developed an interest in using DBRC with their students with disabilities. School district personnel might use the results to determine whether or not they want to support or oppose the use of DBRC within their school district.

The use of DBRC, a behavior management tool, with students with disabilities, has the potential to improve educational experiences and establish a more positive class-

room culture for students with disabilities. Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, and Doolaard (2016) explained that effective behavior management had a positive influence on the academic and social-emotional skills of all students within the classroom. The peers of students with disabilities could potentially become more acceptable of diverse learners as a result of challenging behaviors being effectively managed within the school setting (see Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015). Positive exposure to diverse individuals could lead to a positive effect on all students in an inclusive classroom.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I discussed relevant research regarding including DBRC as part of a comprehensive behavior management plan as an effective strategy for improving the behavior management of students with disabilities. Some elementary school teachers in a school district in a mid-western state were implementing DBRC, but it is unknown how those teachers were structuring and administering DBRC specifically with students with disabilities. Geographical and research method limitations were provided in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, I provide a more in-depth explanation of the past research about DBRC, the components of assertive discipline, and students with disabilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to add to the current research by addressing a gap in how some elementary teachers use DBRC to aide in the behavior management of students with disabilities. In Chapter 2, a synthesis of the current research related to the topics addressed in this dissertation is provided. The main topics in this literature review include the evolution and critical concepts of assertive discipline, DBRC, and students with disabilities. The overall purpose of Chapter 2 is to synthesize research about assertive discipline, students with disabilities, and research related to DBRC.

The conceptual framework governing this dissertation was Canter's assertive discipline program. According to Canter (1989), assertive discipline is a management technique used to diminish the prevalence of undesired classroom behavior.

DBRC is a behavior management technique commonly used to manage undesired behaviors in the classroom. The purpose of this study was to understand how elementary teachers in a mid-western school district were structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. In Chapter 2, I provide a detailed literature review on the evolution and current implementation of DBRC.

A discussion about the history of students with disabilities was necessary for a research study in which the lack of behavior management of these individuals is addressed. The current inclusive nature of many educational settings within the United States has not always been in operation. Therefore, a discussion about how schools and

related services became inclusive of students with disabilities was necessary. The purpose of the current study was to explore an intervention, DBRC, that some elementary school teachers in a school district in a mid-western state use to manage classrooms with students with disabilities, as a result of this more inclusive way of educating all students.

Literature Search Strategy

Research studies were selected from scholarly, peer-reviewed journals dating from 1958 to 2017. A few of the peer-reviewed journals included: *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *Journal of Attention Disorders*, and *Behavioral Disorders*. All literature searches began with searching the keywords through Google Scholar and Walden University's library databases. Databases included Education Resources Information Center, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, Walden University's Dissertations and Theses search engine, ProQuest, and SAGE Journals.

Research articles were first selected if they discussed at least one of the study's topics, including: (a) behavior management, (b) students with disabilities, (c) CICO, (d) DBRC, (e) inclusion education teachers, (f) assertive discipline, (g) authoritative approach, or (h) PBIS. The following combination of search terms was used to locate research literature: *managing disabilities in the school setting, special education classroom management, daily report card interventions, assertive discipline and elementary education, teacher perceptions of inclusive education,* and *CICO classroom management*. One possible way of enacting social change through this study was to improve the knowledge

of how elementary teachers in a mid-western school district structured and administered DBRC for students with disabilities.

Conceptual Framework

Assertive discipline was a behavior management program derived from assertion training and social learning theory (Canter & Canter, 1976). The purpose of assertion training was to teach professionals how to better express their wants, needs, and desires to their employees (Canter & Canter, 1976). The specific components of assertion training included (1) identifying one's wants and feelings, (2) verbalizing those wants and feelings in both positive and negative ways, (3) remaining persistent, (4) using a firm voice, (5) maintaining eye contact, and (6) using gestures as a reinforcement (Canter & Canter, 1976). Canter and Canter (1976) took components of assertion training and created assertive discipline as a plan for teachers to take charge of their classroom both firmly and positively.

Canter and Canter (1976) derived assertive discipline from assertion training, which was used to teach educators to stand up for their wants and feelings, without abusing the wants and feelings of their students. Canter stated that assertive discipline was necessary because teachers had the right to have a positive classroom culture, and students had the right to learn from a supportive teacher (Canter & Canter, 1976). In 2010, Canter stated that assertive discipline was necessary because the changing student demographics meant that previous behavior management interventions were no longer working with the diversity of students today.

Assertive discipline has been misrepresented as a program that was sanction-based when it emphasized positive reinforcement (Melling & Swinson, 1998). Barrett (1985) conducted a literature review on articles that discussed assertive discipline and found that the program was based on various competencies that were all derived from adequate research. Components of assertive discipline provided a framework for the current study.

Assertive Discipline in Historical Context

Assertive discipline, introduced by Canter in 1976, furthered the social discipline model developed by Dreikurs (1968), by including the concept of adding rules that described acceptable student behavior in the classroom. While Dreikurs focused more on teacher modeling, Canter focused more on teacher verbalization and modeling. Unlike Kounin's (1958) preventative discipline model and Dreikurs' work, Canter focused on the habits of successful teachers. The goal of assertive discipline was to reward positive behavior through simple measures such as verbal praise (Canter, 1989). The assertive discipline model adopted the positive and negative reinforcement factors characterized by behaviorism theory (Skinner, 1974). According to Canter, teachers were expected to establish behavioral expectations at the beginning of the year and follow through with appropriate rewards and consequences. Canter (1989) emphasized that consequences should not ridicule the student or cause them psychological or physical harm.

Assertive discipline changed the field of behavior management when it placed the teacher in control over the classroom with maintained respect for the students. Many edu-

cators interpreted the assertive discipline program as one that glorified negative consequences, which resulted in the founders to reintroduce the critical components of the behavior management plan (Canter, 1989). Being an assertive teacher meant to proactively manage a classroom by presetting classroom rules and procedures, along with establishing corresponding consequences. Similar to Dreikurs (1968) and Kounin (1958), Canter's assertive discipline model focused on teachers establishing behavior expectations and then following through with consequences when the expectations were not met.

The assertive teacher's responsibility was to teach students to make appropriate behavior choices (Canter, 1989). Due to previous teachings and reinforcements, students understood which consequences or rewards they received if they choose to behave in a certain way. Educators were not required to implement every behavior management strategy presented within the assertive discipline model. Rather, assertive discipline was meant to be a smorgasbord of strategies to aid teachers in creating a comprehensive behavior management system (Canter, 1989). However, Canter (1989) explained how educators that implemented a plethora of interventions were more likely to fail at achieving behavior management related success. Canter's idea that the teacher could manipulate student behavior contradicted Glasser's (1998) ideas that students performed better when the element of multiple choices was present.

Assertive Discipline Research

Historically, researchers have used the assertive discipline model when addressing parenting issues or behavior management issues in secondary-age students. Due to con-

troversial results about the assertive discipline program's effectiveness, researchers conducted much of the current research in foreign countries. According to Waldron (2017), assertive discipline was controversial because it encouraged teachers to make ethical decisions about addressing individual student behavior while respecting the learning of other students. Bal (2018) derived the Culturally Responsive PBIS framework from applied behaviorism because the focus of PBIS was on accountability. Assertive discipline also focused on keeping the teacher accountable for the overall classroom management and the students accountable for their behavior (Canter & Canter, 1976). Teachers used assertive discipline to manage behaviors in elementary schools, secondary schools, and students with disabilities.

Elementary School

Critics of assertive discipline accused the behavior management plan of being ineffective for managing the behavior of young students. However, more recent research dispelled these claims by finding discrepancies in the critics' findings and through conducting high-quality qualitative research. Palardy (1996) criticized assertive discipline, stating that behavior modification theories had four limitations (a) they treated the symptoms and not the behaviors, (b) the benefits only lasted in the short-term, (c) the benefits did not necessarily transfer to other classrooms or schools, and (d) they de-valued the importance of self-discipline. Wade (1997) contradicted Palardy's claim, stating that a second-grade student chose to help the adults in the building, instead of causing disruption, when teachers implemented assertive discipline in a Connecticut elementary school.

Jones, Barnes, Bailey, and Doolittle (2017) investigated why there were discrepancies in research on student behavior at the elementary level. Results indicated that the discrepancies were due to misaligned program targets and outcomes. Jones et al. suggested that future research focus on assessing behavior modification approaches at a teacher and classroom level and less on the student or school level. The current research study assessed the use of assertive discipline components at the elementary teacher level.

Render, Padilla, and Krank (1989) criticized assertive discipline, stating that the program was ineffective due to only 16 studies conducted within the first 12 years of implementation. While the research on assertive discipline was still not very expansive, more studies supported Canter's claims of assertive discipline being a beneficial behavior management plan. McCormack (1989) found discrepancies in Render et al.'s research and noticed that they only evaluated the abstracts of the 16 studies and not the entire research. Both McCormack and Render et al. agreed that more research comparing assertive discipline to other behavior management models was necessary.

Desiderio and Mullennix (2005) used a case study methodology where the preservice teacher implemented assertiveness in a first-grade class, while the classroom teacher continued to teach using her non-assertive behavior management plan. Observations and teacher reflections contradicted Render et al.'s (1989) ineffective claim indicated that students responded appropriately to each teacher, and assertive discipline did not disrupt the classroom teacher's management plan (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005). Teach-

ers also indicated that elementary student's social skills and academics increased (Caldarella et al., 2018).

Darling-Hammond (1994), a former Teach for America (TFA) teacher, described assertive discipline as harmful and blamed it for the reason why TFA teachers had poor behavior management. However, Darling-Hammond failed to discuss how the five-week summer institute that TFA provided was inadequate training when trying to prepare inexperienced individuals in becoming full-time teachers (Thomas, 2018). Traditionally, certified teachers must have a bachelor's degree plus pass rigorous tests before receiving a teacher's license (Brownell, Bishop, & Sindelar, 2018).

Educators who have had training in education have shown favor towards assertive discipline with desirable results (Mandlebaum, Russell, Krause, & Gonter, 1983). Mandlebaum et al. (1983) used a reversal design and found that assertive discipline decreased disruptive behaviors in third-grade students. Both teachers and principals found the assertive discipline program to be favorable in improving the management of the entire class (Mandlebaum et al., 1983). Nese et al. (2016) added that Title I schools were three times more likely than non-Title I school to abandon using assertive approaches as their school-wide discipline policy. The abandonment was likely due to issues surrounding poverty and the high-needs of the children (McDaniel, Kim, Kwon & Choi, 2018). Overall, teachers, administrators, parents, and students indicated on a survey that assertive school behavior management improved the safety of the school environment.

Secondary School

Assertive discipline was a preventative behavior management program, as administrators expected teachers to pre-create the rules and consequences before the first day of school (Canter & Canter, 1976). Pre-creating rules and consequences were important because they provided a structure for students to understand how to behave appropriately in the school setting (Adamson, McKenna, & Mitchell, 2019). Assertive discipline was effective because teachers actively worked to stop misbehaviors by using a pre-planned discipline plan instead of allowing the behaviors to attempt to work themselves out (Barrett, 1985). Preventative measures such as pre-creating rules were essential for secondary-age students because they helped to foster positive social interactions and reduced the risk-factors of negative behavior (Cornell & Huang, 2016). When secondary schools focused more on preventing misbehavior and less on being too strict or being too lax, students were less likely to bully, fight, commit suicide, and use illegal drugs and alcohol (Cornell & Huang, 2016). Although the current study included the use of assertive discipline in elementary schools, it was relevant to understand how the usage of assertive discipline in secondary schools improved the behaviors of students.

The effectiveness of assertive discipline on reducing disruptive behaviors in secondary students had mixed results likely due to misconceptions and lack of fidelity during implementation. Martin (1994) found that the presence of assertive discipline in a secondary school did not reduce disruptive behaviors due to poor implementation by both the administration and the teachers. Gerlinger and Wo (2016) found that secondary

schools that used authoritative approaches, such as assertive discipline, more effectively reduced bullying as compared to secondary schools that used passive approaches to discipline. Jia, Konold, and Cornell (2016) added that drop-out rates also decreased with the use of behaviorist-derived approaches. The current study explored how teachers were using assertive discipline components in their behavior management plan to reduce inappropriate behaviors.

Student, teacher, and administrator perceptions on assertive discipline generally supported that the program was effective. Teacher reports on the use of positive reinforcement increased after assertive discipline training (Gottfredson, 1990). Gregory et al. (2016) found that secondary students preferred to learn from a teacher who was firm in managing disruptive behavior, which ultimately improved the overall school climate. Houchens et al. (2017) used a survey to compare teacher perceptions of teaching conditions in schools that used assertive approaches and schools that did not use assertive approaches. Results of the survey indicated that teachers in schools who used assertive approaches reported higher levels of clear behavior expectations between faculty and students as compared to schools that did not implement assertive approaches. Vancel, Missall, and Bruhn (2016) used a qualitative survey and found that social validity scores for assertive discipline were significantly lower in secondary teachers as compared to elementary teachers. Ultimately, assertive discipline was not an approach that was widely accepted or objected but was generally perceived positively by its adopters. Therefore,

the current research included interviewing elementary teachers because they tended to like assertive discipline practices more than secondary school teachers.

Pas, Johnson, Debnam, Hulleman, and Bradshaw (2019) found that secondary schools with a higher fidelity of assertive discipline (80% or better) resulted in lower overall suspension rates. Pas, Ryoo, Musci, and Bradshaw (2019) added that truancy rates of secondary students also decreased with the implementation of assertive discipline. Noltemeyer, Palmer, James, and Petrasek (2019) extended the research by adding that out-of-school suspensions also decreased. The current study included assertive discipline's key concepts to explore how elementary teachers used DBRC, a behavior management strategy, with their students with disabilities.

Students with Disabilities

Current research in the United States did not explicitly include the use of assertive discipline with students with disabilities. However, this population tended to have a lot of the behavioral problems within the inclusive classroom (Feldman, Carter, Asmus, & Brock, 2016). Much of the research on assertive discipline included behavior difficulties but did not specify whether those difficulties were due to a disability or a disorder. When addressing students with disabilities, assertive discipline was more effective when implemented on an individual scale as opposed to on a class-wide basis (Feldman, 1994). The purpose of the current study was to explore how teachers differentiated their assertive discipline practices, within a comprehensive behavioral management plan, to support students with disabilities.

One common criticism of assertive discipline was that Canter's use of positive praise and negative consequence was ineffective when dealing with students with disabilities. Some studies indicated that assertive discipline was ineffective with students with disabilities because of the negative perceptions that some teachers had about the students (Evans et al., 1991). Moore, Maggin, Thompson, Gordon, Daniels, and Lang (2019) conducted a literature review to determine if positive teacher praise, a component of assertive discipline, for students with disabilities, was an evidence-based practice. Results of the study were inconclusive, likely due to researchers not including students with autism or those with severe disabilities. Evans et al. (1991) found that many critics of assertive discipline used for students with disabilities was derived from the behaviorism versus humanism debate and not based on sound research. Therefore, it was critical to ask teachers if and how they were using positive praise with students with disabilities, rather than basing information off inconsistent research.

Feldman (1994) suggested that identifying the reinforcement preferences of the student with disabilities made assertive discipline more effective in controlling physical aggression, temper tantrums, and non-cooperation. Aspiranti, Bebech, Ruffo, and Skinner (2019) extended Feldman's research by adding that students were more likely to exhibit positive behaviors when they clearly understood the rules and expectations for the task. Feldman also exclaimed that assertive discipline should have been paired with an inclusive classroom to help students with disabilities to learn to behave similarly to their typically developing peers. Melius, Swoszowski, and Siders (2015) negated Feldman's

claims by proving that assertive discipline procedures were effective in improving the appropriate behaviors of students in a self-contained alternative education setting. Melius et al. added to the body of literature by proving that teachers could use assertive discipline across settings for students with disabilities. The current study included interviewing both general and special education teachers to determine how they were using assertive discipline procedures with students with disabilities.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

It was necessary to include a review of the literature surrounding DBRC and students with disabilities. The review started with the historical usage of DBRC and the usage of DBRC with students with disabilities. The final section includes a review of the current behavioral supports that teachers use in inclusive classrooms.

Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRC)

Initially, DBRC was a series of checklists of student behaviors that occurred at school, and the related rewards and consequences that families implemented at home (Edlund, 1969). Historically, DBRC was a part of a larger behavior management plan, CICO (Wolfe et al., 2016). CICO was a behavior management plan targeted towards students who did not respond to universal interventions (Klingbeil, Dart, & Schramm, 2019). Educators tended to use more targeted, intense behavior management interventions when universal interventions were ineffective in decreasing undesired behaviors (Lloyd, Torelli, & Symons, 2016). Teachers used assertive discipline and other behaviorist principles to provide external evaluations of behavior that were characteristic in

DBRC (Cressey, 2019). For example, the progression of DBRC implementation included fading the teacher's external evaluation of the student's behavior into allowing the student to provide a self-reflection of their behavior **(**Radley & Dart, 2019**).** The focus of the present study was to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered a DBRC to manage the undesired behaviors of students with disabilities.

Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRC) and Students with Disabilities

DBRC was an evidence-based intervention used to decrease students' disruptive behavior (Owens et al. 2018). DBRC was a daily checklist of specific behaviors and the frequency of those behaviors (Hustus, Owens, Volpe, Briesch, & Daniels, 2018). DBRC was useful because it used home-school communication to reward positive behavior (Riden et al., 2018). Mautone, Marcelle, Tresco, and Power (2015) defined home-school communication as the relationship between families and school and its resulting activities such as phone calls, written notes, and conferences. Teachers, parents, and students used DBRC to tailor an intervention to fit the targeted behavior and to determine the anticipated rewards when the behavior was achieved (Miller, Crovello, & Chafouleas, 2017).

There are three types of DBRC: with incentives, with response cost, and a combination of the two (Mires & Lee, 2017). According to Mires and Lee, when using DBRC with incentives, teachers provided the student with rewards when they met the target behavior. DBRC with response cost meant the parents and teacher removed a reward that the student earned previously. The combination of DBRCs included both practices in one intervention. Hart, Fabiano, Evans, Manos, Hannah, and Vujnovic (2017) found that

preschool teachers were more likely to use combination DBRC as compared to elementary and middle school teachers. The research did not state which type of DBRC was more effective and in under which circumstances.

DBRC was a necessary and useful intervention that decreased the prevalence of disruptive behaviors and other disability-related symptoms within the classroom (Goldman et al., 2019). DBRC was especially necessary for managing the behaviors of students with disabilities because between 77 and 89% of individualized education plans (IEP) included a communication of goals component, yet 61% of parents were dissatisfied with the actual communication that occurred (Slade, Eisenhower, Carter, & Blacher, 2018). DBRC was particularly effective with students with disabilities because teachers and parents could tailor the goals and rewards to match the specific needs of the student (Radley & Dart, 2019). Goldman et al. (2019) showed that DBRC was effective in increasing the on-task behaviors of a second-grade student with autism. Cressey (2019) used PBIS principles to create a DBRC for a student with emotional distress and who exhibited other disruptive behaviors. The results of the study indicated that the student was able to self-monitor her behavior with fading adult feedback (Cressey, 2019). Mires and Lee (2017) used DBRC to improve the neglectful and disruptive behaviors of a third-grade student diagnosed with an emotional and behavioral disorder. The current literature indicated that DBRC was effective in managing the behaviors of students with disabilities. However, the literature did not discuss the role that the teacher played within that success.

Iznardo et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 1,805 articles where results indicated a decrease in teacher and parent-reported symptoms of ADHD and externalizing behavior with effect sizes of .53 and .34. Perle and Curtis (2017) suggested that DBRC was more effective when teachers took an extended amount of time to monitor student behaviors. Miller et al. (2017) found that using Direct Behavior Rating–Single-Item Scales, in conjunction with the DBRC intervention, allowed the observer to make fewer observations, while still obtaining reliable results.

The body of literature on behavior management needs more research, although researchers identified DBRC to be an evidence-based behavioral intervention. Iznardo et al. (2017) wanted to find the effect of DBRC on academic achievement, as a secondary outcome, but the results indicated there was no effect. Miller et al. (2017) suggested that future research focused on better ways to monitor student progress while using DBRC. Because the DBRC range of effectiveness varied from small to large, Riden et al. (2018) suggested that future research focused on which populations DBRC worked best with and their effect sizes when compared with other interventions.

Teachers used technology-based DBRCs, such as Class Dojo, to provide parents with real-time updates on the behaviors of their students with disabilities (Riden, Markelz, & Randolph, 2019). Class Dojo used a response cost, behavioralist approach, of giving and removing points based on real-time student behavior, as an alternative to punishment (Robacker, Rivera, & Warren, 2016). The data was then immediately shared with parents quicker than using traditional paper and pencil DBRC. Krach, McCreery, and

Rimel (2017) found that teachers were more likely to use paper and pencil DBRC to track negative behaviors and Class Dojo to record positive behaviors. The introduction of Class Dojo and other digital DBRC improved the communication between school and home, but the literature still did not address what role teachers played in deciding how and when to use DBRC with students with disabilities.

When researchers acknowledged limitations in a research study, it allowed the reader to have the opportunity to provide suggestions for future research. One known limitation of DBRC was that it requires significant parent involvement, which was difficult to control in research (Miller et al., 2017). Mires (2017) explained how parents who had home-life difficulties might have had trouble involving themselves in providing rewards and consequences, as indicated in the DBRC protocol. According to Ridden et al. (2018), another natural limitation was that teachers created DBRCs to meet the needs of the student, which made it difficult for researchers to create a standardized protocol for the intervention.

Students with Disabilities

Inclusive Classrooms

Inclusion education meant to educate students with disabilities alongside their typically developing peers within the general education classroom. IDEA (2004) required school districts to ensure that students with disabilities learned within an environment that was least restrictive (LRE) to their learning capabilities. For many students with mild-to-moderate disabilities, the LRE was the general education classroom. Due to this

legal requirement, many educators believed that school districts were including students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

In the 1990s, Eller, Fisher, Gilchrist, Rozman, and Shockney (2015) showed that there was more of a push for inclusive education when compared to the 1980s. However, although IEP teams placed students with disabilities in the general education classroom, they were often not inclusively learning with their peers (Feldman et al., 2016). General education teachers lacked the knowledge of knowing how to manage disability-related behaviors (Mohr-Jensen, Steen-Jensen, Bang-Schnack, & Thingvad, 2019). General education teachers provided universal behavior management intervention, yet they struggled to offer more targeted interventions for students with disabilities (Chow & Gilmour, 2016). Therefore, elementary teachers needed exposure to interventions that research had proven to be effective in managing challenging behaviors.

General education classrooms were the LRE for students with disabilities because of the educational and social benefits (Eller et al., 2015). Peers in the general education classroom could help students with disabilities academically, as well as provide them with beneficial friendships (Eller et al., 2015; Riester-Wood, 2015). When compared to students in separate settings, students in the general education classes were more likely to graduate high school on time, attend college, and gain employment in their adult lives (Theobald, Gratz, & Holden, 2017). Cohen and Demchak (2018) explained how predictable schedules and one-on-one teaching helped inclusion classrooms to operate effectively.

The general education classroom appeared to be the LRE for students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in theory but not in practice. Eller et al. (2015) explained how, when students with disabilities misbehaved in the classroom, it influenced the behavior of the other students. Inclusion teachers were inconsistent with classroom management policies and managing on-task behavior due to larger class sizes (Eller et al., 2015). The inconsistencies in classroom management practices were likely due to inadequate preservice teacher preparation programs (Flower, McKenna, & Haring, 2017).Therefore, students required separate settings to meet their individual needs.

The debate about inclusive education was extensive because researchers both support and oppose the practice. Nonetheless, due to government legislation, school districts were required to consider the general education classroom as the LRE for many students with disabilities (O'Connor, Yasik, & Horner, 2016). Teachers upheld the benefits of an inclusive classroom when they implemented effective behavior management practices. Miller, Dufrene, Sterling, Olmi, and Bachmayer (2015) proved that some behavior management practices, such as DBRC, were useful in managing challenging behaviors. However, some elementary teachers do not use these practices, causing a research-to-practice gap. Additional research targeting the use of DBRC in inclusive classrooms was needed because the general education classroom was becoming the LRE for more students with disabilities.

Behavioral Interventions

With the increase of special education learning mandates, teachers were experiencing behavior management challenges they were ill-prepared to handle (Molbaek, 2018). An estimated 95% of students with disabilities were learning in the general education classroom, and 60% of them were in there for over 80% of the time (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Elementary teachers in a school district in a mid-western state struggled to manage challenging behaviors in the classroom despite having some training in implementing behavioral interventions for students with disabilities (DiGennaro Reed, Blackman, Erath, Brand, & Novak, 2018).

According to Pas, Larson, Reinke, Herman, and Bradshaw (2016), teachers wanted to learn how to manage classrooms with students with disabilities. Although teachers desired to improve their behavior management methods, they continued to implement ineffective practices (Honkasilta, Vehkakoski, & Vehmas, 2016). The complexity of behavioral interventions was a contributing factor to why elementary teachers without special education backgrounds continued to implement ineffective practices. (Stahmer et al., 2015).

Students with and without disabilities exhibited challenging behaviors in the general education classroom. More specifically, these behaviors presented themselves as calling out, violating classroom rules, being out of the seat, and completing classwork quickly, but with low accuracy (Harrison, Schultz, & Evans, 2017). Maddox et al. (2018) found no correlation between a student’s IQ and whether or not the student exhibited challeng-

ing behaviors. However, students with disabilities were more likely to exhibit challenging behaviors related to impulse control, as compared to students without a diagnosis (Maddox et al., 2018). According to Gaastra, Groen, Tucha, and Tucha (2016), teachers could manage impulse control and off-task behaviors through evidence-based behavioral interventions. Interventions that targeted executive functioning skills, such as a high praise to reprimand ratio, were most appropriate for students with disabilities when implemented with fidelity (Caldarella et al., 2015; Maddox et al., 2018). Educators could manage challenging behaviors exhibited in the classroom with effective behavioral interventions.

Elementary teachers did not always administer the interventions necessary to manage challenging behavior in the classroom. The lack of behavioral interventions caused a negative classroom environment, which exacerbated the prevalence of challenging behaviors (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). More vigilant teachers tended to maintain classrooms where more students were on-task (Matovu, 2019). However, Akalın and Sucuoglu (2015) found that teachers who received feedback on their performance were able to improve their classroom management strategies. Behavioral interventions were a necessary component of effective behavior management, although teachers admittedly were not implementing them with fidelity.

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature about assertive discipline, and other major constructs of the study. Researchers had mixed perceptions about Canter's assertive discipline plan. Critics believed that behavior modification theories, such as assertive disci-

pline, de-valued, the student, while advocates stated that assertive discipline was most effective when implemented with fidelity (Palardy, 1996). However, DBRC was a student-centered behavioral intervention that effectively managed positive behavior (Pyle & Fabiano, 2017). DBRC could be used to manage off-task and disruptive behaviors effectively, but it was unknown how teachers effectively structured DBRC with students with disabilities (Pyle & Fabiano, 2017). The history of students with disabilities in an educational environment has been a series of legislation to protect their rights. Therefore, teachers needed to implement behavioral interventions that were effective in managing a diverse range of disability-related behaviors (Maddox et al., 2018). The present study included an exploration of how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities based on assertive discipline procedures. Chapter 3 includes information about the methodology chosen to address this gap in the research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to explore how elementary school teachers in a school district in a mid-western state structured and administered DBRC as part of a behavior management plan for their students with disabilities. The function of Chapter 3 is to define the chosen research methodology and corresponding procedures used to address the research questions. In Chapter 3, information about the research design, the role of the researcher, methodology, teacher-participants, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, and ethics is presented.

The qualitative exploratory research design was used for the exploration of unknown concepts. Researchers have shown that DBRC was an effective intervention for managing undesired behaviors. However, it was unknown how elementary teachers were using DBRC specifically with students with disabilities. Elementary teachers knew how to structure and administer DBRC were selected as the participants who were interviewed to provide knowledge about the DBRC intervention.

Data was gathered from 10 elementary school teachers in a school district in a mid-western state who have used DBRC with their students with disabilities. Teacher-participant information was kept private on a password-protected laptop throughout the interviewing and data reporting processes. Paper-based data such as signed consent forms were stored in a locked file cabinet where only I had access. The key that connected participants' names with the codes was also stored in the locked file cabinet. Elementary teachers were interviewed in various places regarding how they structured and adminis-

tered DBRC with students with disabilities. I created the interview questions by using key concepts from assertive discipline. The results of the interviews were coded for thematic similarities that were then interpreted to answer the research questions.

Research Design and Rationale

The current study included a qualitative research methodology to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that qualitative research had the following characteristics: data came from the participant's point-of-view, the researcher was the major data collector, and the researcher collected the data within the setting of occurrence. Traditionally, qualitative research was used to explore the understanding that people have created about a specific subject (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A qualitative approach was most suitable for this study because of the research gap in understanding of how elementary teachers use DBRC with students with disabilities. Themes about the viewpoints that teachers have constructed when using DBRC with students with disabilities encompassed the findings of this study.

Qualitative exploratory researchers combined the individual experiences that a group of people have with a shared topic and turn those experiences into a universal theme about that topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In the present study, elementary school teachers were interviewed about their experiences with using DBRC with students with disabilities. The interviews were scripted and coded to discover common themes that led to a universal experience about the use of DBRC with students with disabilities. Qual-

itative exploratory research was especially crucial for this study because it required that previously held opinions about assertive discipline, behavior management, and DBRC be put aside (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It was necessary to start from a blank slate when attempting to enact social change in the special education field.

In the present study, the teachers who were interviewed had direct experiences with structuring and administering DBRC with elementary students with disabilities. Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016) suggested the qualitative researcher focus on choosing a sample size that was based on the purpose and the limitations of the study. Due to the narrow purpose of the study and the sparse availability of participants, the present study included interviewing 10 teachers using semi-structured interviewing (see Moustakas, 1994). Structured interviewing was not suitable because qualitative exploratory research design included a need for inquiry of the participants' experiences before finding themes within the experiences and structured interview questions could not be amended (Holloway & Galvin, 2016). Therefore, the elementary teachers expressed their experiences with DBRC with students with disabilities, based on their answers to the pre-determined interview questions (see Appendix). However, the development of the themes of the DBRC intervention was derived from the follow-up interview questions. A special education director, a behavior specialist, a learning specialist, and a behavior intervention specialist, all of whom were not participants in this study, reviewed the interview questions before the interviews.

Central Research Question: How do elementary teachers in a mid-western school district use DBRC to support the behavior management of students with disabilities?

Subquestion 1: How do elementary teachers create rules and expectations when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?

Subquestion 2: How do elementary teachers provide positive reinforcement and repetition when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?

Qualitative Traditions Considered but Rejected

Case study. Qualitative case studies are used to gain a deeper understanding of the processes that could be used to change educational policies and practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Case study researchers usually study the participants or the phenomenon over time (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Data collection procedures included single interviews with the participants. According to Merriam and Tisdell, case studies were used to provide substantive descriptions about a specific program or educational system.

Case studies were a useful research design when the researcher already knew the boundaries of the topic (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Within the present study, it was known that teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities, but it was unknown how the teachers structured and administered DBRC. Yin (2017) stated that case studies answered the how and the why in research. The present study included an exploration of how elementary teachers pre-planned when using DBRC and how they used assertive discipline within that pre-planning process, but the “why” was not addressed.

Ethnography. Ethnography was the study of groups of people to create a greater understanding of their culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I lived in the same location as the participants to study their shared patterns (Hammersley, 2018). Elementary teachers were interviewed about their experiences with DBRC at a location that was not accessible to the other participants during the time of the interview. In education, ethnographies were commonly used to understand better the aspect of school or classroom culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

An exploration of an aspect of behavior management by interviewing elementary teachers that work at different schools occurred in the present study. In ethnographies, researchers usually take on the participant-observer role to obtain the in-depth data needed to identify the shared patterns (Takyi, 2015). In the current study, I never participated in or observed the teachers' classrooms as a part of the data collection process. Ethnography qualitative design was not suitable because the participants were located at various locations. The study focused on behavior management and not classroom culture, and I never was a participant-observer.

Grounded theory. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), grounded theory researchers develop theories after evaluating the data. Researchers gather a substantive amount of data, compare the data segments for similarities and differences, and then develop a comprehensive theory of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). The developed theory is meant to provide insight into the current practice and serve as a framework for future research (Birks & Mills, 2015). Grounded theory was not suitable because the

present study used Canter's (1976) assertive discipline as the conceptual framework for the research questions and design.

Role of the Researcher

The purpose of the qualitative exploratory study was to explore the behavior management system that elementary school teachers in a mid-western school district used with students with disabilities. The behavior management system was the use of DBRC with students with disabilities. In this qualitative study, my role as the researcher was to act as the data collection instrument, by gathering information from the participants, and then by identifying the essence of the participants' experiences (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

I did not fulfill the roles of observer, participant, or observer-participant in this study. The only role that I fulfilled was an interviewer; therefore, the use of bracketing was necessary. I became more sensitive to the participants' experiences with DBRC to identify the overall experiences with the intervention (see Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas, bracketing occurred when the researcher identified their preconceived notions and biases related to the study of the phenomenon. The preconceived notions, biases, and any other conflicting interests related to the use of DBRC are as follows.

Positionality, Relationships, and Ethical Issues

I currently work as a special education teacher within the school district that was a part of this study. I do not hold a supervisory position; however, I may have engaged in professional development with some of the potential participants. This school year was

my second year employed in this school district; therefore, I have not established strong personal relationships with the participants. I did gain access to the participants' professional email addresses after receiving approval from the district gatekeeper. Although the same school district employed the participants and me, we do not work in the same schools.

Biases

In the mid-western school district, district personnel encouraged learning specialists to structure and administer DBRC with students with disabilities. I previously believed that DBRC was effective in managing the behavior of students with disabilities. Qualitative researchers reflected upon the experiences of the participants and not on their own biases or feelings (Moustakas, 1994). Special education administrators and the coordinator for student support services in the school district of focus approved the pre-determined interview questions to ensure that the questions were not leading participants to share specific views about DBRC. The school district designated the executive assistant to the chief equity officer as the gatekeeper for researching within the mid-western school district. I used member checking to provide credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Birt et al., 2016).

Methodology

Participant Selection

Participants were current or former elementary teachers that have worked in the mid-western school district and have used DBRC with students with disabilities. The lim-

itations of the participant criteria resulted in a small availability of participants, which may or may not have affected the transferability of the data. The mid-western school district defined elementary school as K-5. The school district's gatekeeper provided permission to access the emails of potential participants. Potential participants were then contacted through their professional email addresses, informing them about the study and asking them if they have had experiences with DBRC. Participants who met the qualifications and were interested were then presented with the informed consent document to finalize their recruitment to participate in the study.

The sampling strategy was purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was most common in qualitative research because researchers sought out participants based on a specific criterion (Bungay, Oliffe, & Atchison, 2016). It was known that the participants met the current or former elementary teacher criterion based on information provided by the school district's gatekeeper and the potential participants. The teachers must have structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. Self-report determined if participants met the experience criterion.

The number of participants was limited to the geographical boundaries of the mid-western school district. Data saturation defined the number of interviews. A researcher can achieve data saturation when new patterns of information, after so many interviews, were no longer received (Malterud et al., 2016). However, Walden University required that student-researchers interview a minimum of 10 participants for a qualitative study. Therefore, I obtained data saturation within the current study after 10 interviews.

Instrumentation

Interviewing was the method of instrumentation for the current study. Interviewing was necessary because it was impossible to observe an individual's feelings, thoughts, or events that occurred in the past (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Before being interviewed, I asked the elementary teachers have they already pre-planned the process of structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. It was easier to interview teachers about their thoughts and actions during that pre-planning time instead of having them recreate the process. More specifically, I used exploratory interviewing as the instrumentation in the current study. The data collection section includes a more in-depth description of exploratory interviewing as relevant to the current study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment. The school district's gatekeeper provided me access to contact potential teacher-participants. Participants then were recruited through a message to their professional email addresses. Potential participants received the informed consent document to recruit them to the study officially. The gatekeeper had the names and job titles of teachers who currently or formerly work within the district.

Participation. Participants met specific qualifications to participate in the current study. First, participants were current or former elementary school teachers within the mid-western school district. Public school websites confirmed whether that school employed an individual. For instance, when the websites were not up to date, the school district's gatekeeper was able to confirm or deny whether the district had ever employed an

individual. However, the gatekeeper did not provide information about the current employment status of a potential participant.

Next, participants must have had experience with structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. Participants were shown examples of DBRC and given the synonyms to ensure that participants understood that all these synonyms refer to the same intervention. The synonyms include “daily progress reports,” “check in-check-out list,” “daily checklist,” “behavior tally sheet,” “daily report card,” and “behavior intervention plan checklist.” The intervention was referred to as DBRC within the current study, due to the individualized nature of DBRC.

Before participating, potential participants signed an informed consent form, after submitting the documentation, myself and the participant agreed on a date and time for an interview. The audio recorded interview lasted 30 minutes or less, and it included structured questions (see Appendix) and unstructured follow-up questions. After the interview, I transcribed the transcripts by hand. Participants then checked an emailed copy of their transcript to ensure that they accurately represented their position during the interview. I exited participants from the study after approving the transcriptions and receiving their participation reward.

Data collection. The primary data collection method was a one-time, 30-minute exploratory interview conducted in an undisclosed area. The interviewing included providing a context for the topic, apprehending the topic, and clarifying the topic (Bevan, 2014). When contextualizing the topic, it was essential first to discuss how and why the

individual became in contact with the topic (Bevan, 2014). Therefore, the semi-structured interview began with questions that asked the teachers why they chose to use the intervention with their students with disabilities. Bevan explained that researchers apprehended the topic by asking questions that dig into the participants' experiences with the topic. During this stage, I asked more specific questions about how the elementary teachers pre-planned, structured, and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. Finally, Bevan defined clarifying the topic as using an imaginative variation to explore different aspects of the topic. The final structured questions encouraged the elementary teachers to imagine using DBRC with students with various disabilities that they have not previously encountered, including intellectual, physical, or mental disabilities.

Teacher-participants were interviewed either within their classrooms or in another setting of the participant's choice. Interviews lasted no longer than 30 minutes, and they were audio-recorded using the Photo Booth application on a MacBook computer. The video option in the Photo Booth application was disabled. After the interview, I transcribed the entire audiotape into a script. I decided to transcribe the entire interview because exploratory studies usually have an extensive amount of data, and only writing a few notes may not have fully developed the essence of the phenomenon (see McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003).

I used McLellan et al.'s (2003) transcription protocol to ensure that all of the transcripts were compatible when coding for thematic similarities. McLellan et al.'s transcription protocol also guided me on how to protect sensitive information such as the

specific names of students or names of the elementary schools. The transcripts were checked against the audiotapes to ensure that the transcription was accurate before coding (McLellan et al., 2003). The scripts were then manually open-coded for themes that related to the structuring and administering of DBRC with students with disabilities. McLellan et al. explained that the amount of transcription and the information from the transcribed interviews directly related to the research questions. Participants checked an emailed version of their transcripts for accuracy. Member checking or participant validation was used in qualitative research to ensure the credibility of the research (Birt et al., 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

One-on-one qualitative teacher interviews generated the data. Qualitative data analysis included participants' thoughts, feelings, and overall experiences with the topic (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described open coding as tentatively labeling data using generic to specific labels derived from the research questions, purpose, and conceptual framework. I coded interview transcripts on how elementary teachers created rules and expectations and provided positive reinforcement with DBRC.

I used a constant comparative analysis method during data collection. Olson, McAllister, Grinnell, Gehrke Walters, and Appunn (2016) defined constant comparative analysis as comparing one piece of data to another piece of data in search of common

themes. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) added to Olson et al.'s definition by stating that the data must be reviewed numerous times before comparing segments of data. For the current study, the transcribed teacher interviews were reviewed and compared throughout multiple sessions to explore how elementary teachers structure and administer DBRC. I used Google Docs and Google Sheets to transcribe and sort the analyzed data. Both pieces of software supported the discovery of emerging themes within the data.

In qualitative research, it was necessary to acknowledge disconfirming cases. Padgett (2016) described disconfirming cases as contradictory data. There were instances, in interviewing, where most of the participants supported one belief about the phenomenon, but other participants held a contradictory belief. Other potential instances of disconfirming cases were a result of confirmation bias, where researchers deliberately influence the coding and analysis of data to support their beliefs (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). In instances of disconfirming cases, the data must be re-read and affirmed that the discrepancies were due to differing participant experiences and not due to researcher bias. Disconfirming cases could potentially become recommendations for future research.

Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility was maintaining the internal validity of the study. Qualitative researchers must engage with participants for prolonged periods to build trust (Morse, 2015). I used member checking to accrue credibility in the present research. Member checking included allowing participants to check the interview transcripts for inaccura-

cies (Birt et al.,2016; Morse, 2015). The participants received copies of the transcript, and they double-checked the transcripts for inaccuracies or misinterpretations. Participants engaged in member checking to ensure that the information represented their perspectives and that my previously held biases did not taint the data (see Morse, 2015).

Open coding was used for the current study because establishing a coding system for semi-structured interviews ensured that the interviews were relatively standardized (Morse, 2015). Berger (2015) defined reflexivity as a method that researchers use to accrue credibility by being self-aware about their biases about the study. After the the committee approved the final revision, I emailed an executive summary to each participant, principal, and the executive assistant to the chief equity officer by using the blind carbon copy feature to send the group email.

Transferability

Qualitative researchers used thick descriptions to achieve transferability or external validity. Thick descriptions were narrative notes that included providing substantial details about every aspect of the study (Hadi & Closs, 2016). The present study included thick descriptions of the teacher's perceptions, thoughts, actions, and feelings about DBRC. I then used the thick descriptions given by the participants to develop the themes on the structure and implementation of DBRC.

Qualitative researchers also used reflexive journaling as a means of obtaining transferability and checking researcher bias. Researcher bias included anticipating the results or expecting specific results (Morse, 2015). Reflexive journaling was a process

where the researcher writes down their thoughts and reflects on their actions throughout the research process (Meyer & Willis, 2018). The novice researcher can use journaling to plan ways to handle challenges during the research process (Meyer & Willis, 2018). Researchers could use their journal notes to reflect on practices that were beneficial and practices that did not help the progression of the study.

Dependability

In quantitative studies, reliability referred to the accuracy of the instrument regarding consistency and repeatability (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Dependability was the qualitative counterpart of reliability. Qualitative researchers used appropriate strategies such as external audits to establish dependability. External audits occurred when an individual, independent of the data collection or analysis process, reviewed the research study for inaccuracies or misinterpretations of data (Heale & Twycross, 2015). External audits were necessary when results appear biased (Morse, 2015). Walden University has assigned a doctoral committee that contained a university research reviewer, who reviewed the data collection and analysis procedures before approving this dissertation for publication.

Confirmability

Confirmability was like objectivity in quantitative research because researchers conducted both types of research without biases (Morse, 2015). Due to its subjective nature, qualitative research must be rigorous to be labeled as high-quality (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Reflexivity in research referred to the researcher identifying their biases

about the study. I ensured that those biases did not affect the confirmability of the study. Previous experiences using DBRC with students with disabilities did not taint the interview process because of reflexivity journaling practices.

Ethical Procedures

The participants currently or have previously worked within the same school district as me. Walden University rarely allowed students to interview participants with whom they directly work. Therefore, I did not recruit elementary teachers who fitted the criteria to become a participant and who worked within the same school building as me for this study. Individuals who worked in the school district had access to all employees through the internal employee system. However, for the current study, I received access to potential participant's emails by going through the school district's gatekeeper.

Walden University required that qualitative research studies included between 10 and 12 participants. In case a participant did not begin the study or withdrew before the completion of the study, I kept every qualifying consent form until data saturation was complete. Adverse events that could have occurred during data collection that would affect the overall research study included a natural disaster or a tragic event within the school district or town. If an adverse event would have occurred, the targeted participants of the research study would have expanded to all school districts within the same state.

The process of conducting face-to-face interviews as a data collection method could have raised ethical concerns. Berger (2015) explained that the researcher and the participant might have established a more personal role throughout the research process.

Before participating in the interview, participants completed an informed consent form that separated any previously held roles with the current role as a researcher. Researchers used informed consent to describe every step of the research process, using everyday language, to potential participants (Simon, Schartz, Rosenthal, Eisenstein, & Klein, 2018). When interviewing, qualitative researchers should have expressed the results of the data through anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent (Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). Consumers of research should not have been able to locate specific participants in the current study, based on the information described in the research study.

I stored all data related to the current study for a period no shorter than five years. I will destroy the data through shredding after five years. Ethical considerations for storing data included ensuring that the identities of the participants were protected. Surmiak (2018) suggested that researchers use pseudonyms during data collection to protect the confidentiality of vulnerable research participants. During the interviewing process, I identified participants as pseudonyms, but I did not mention the pseudonyms during the data analysis stage. I conducted the interviews, manually transcribed, and coded the data for thematic similarities, so that I did not disseminate participant information to other individuals.

Other ethical concerns relevant to the current study included providing incentives for the participants' time. Hsieh and Kocielnik (2016) found that providing an incentive attracted participants that have similar beliefs. Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) explained how teachers have a stressful job and often work long hours on lesson planning

and other district mandates. Not providing incentives could have meant that there was less interest in teachers volunteering to participate in the study (Hsieh & Kocielnik, 2016). Therefore, the participants each received a five-dollar gift card. Participants were aware of the incentives when they signed the informed consent document before the interview.

Summary

In summary, Chapter 3 included an explanation of the qualitative exploratory methodology that I used to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC to manage the behavior of students with disabilities. I presented a detailed description of participant selection procedures, data collection, and data analysis. I also provided information for the role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research was to explore how elementary school teachers in a school district in a mid-western state used DBRC with students with disabilities. Effective implementation of DBRC could have helped with the overall management of inclusive classrooms, resulting in increased engagement in academic instruction (see Gage et al., 2018). The function of Chapter 4 is to define the results from the research study. In Chapter 4, information about the setting, data collection procedures, data analysis, results of the study, and evidence of trustworthiness is presented. The research questions were intended to address a potential gap in practice in that some teachers struggled to manage inclusive classrooms despite the availability and effectiveness of the DBRC intervention. The research questions gathered teacher's experiences with DBRC through the perspective of Canter's (1976) assertive discipline program.

Central Research Question: How do elementary school teachers in a mid-western school district use DBRC to support the behavior management of students with disabilities?

Subquestion 1: How do elementary teachers create rules and expectations when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?

Subquestion 2: How do elementary teachers provide positive reinforcement and repetition when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?

Setting

The interviews all took place in the mid-western town where the school district of focus operated. One interview took place at a fast-food restaurant, one took place at a local church, and one took place at the board of education. Two interviews took place in my classroom, and the other five interviews took place in the classrooms of the participants. Through the use of email, participants scheduled the day and time of their interviews. They also were able to determine the location of their interviews. Seven of the interviews took place after work hours, two took place during the teacher's plan time, and one interview took place on the weekend. The consent form was emailed to participants before the interview and a printed copy was signed at the interview. At the beginning of each interview, I stated the date, time, and purpose of the study. The participants were also asked if they wanted to continue to participate voluntarily in the interview and if they still met the inclusion criteria. Finally, the participants were asked if they had any questions before the interview started. At the end of the interviews, the participants were asked if they had any final thoughts. The interview responses were not subjected to any biases at the time of the interviews.

Participant Demographics

Participant eligibility was determined by receiving consent from the gatekeeper and the principals at each individual elementary school. Next, all of the potential participants who worked in the elementary schools, where the principal had given consent, were emailed. Each teacher's email address was located on the schools' public website. The

email sent to potential participants asked them if they had experiences with using DBRC with students with disabilities. The consent form was also attached to the email. Teachers who sent the consent form back and scheduled their interviews were chosen. A total of 11 consent forms were sent, but one participant never scheduled an interview.

Data Collection

Participant Information

The selection of participants contained four general education teachers and six special education teachers. Table 1 showcases the information of the participants. Four of the participants were former elementary teachers; three of those participants held other positions within the district. One participant used to work for the district, but is now employed as a middle school teacher in a different school district. The other six participants are currently employed by four different elementary schools in the district of focus.

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant	Gender	General education or special education
#1	Female	Special Education
#2	Male	General Education
#3	Female	General Education
#4	Female	Special Education
#5	Female	Special Education
#6	Female	General Education
#7	Female	Special Education
#8	Female	General Education
#9	Female	Special Education
#10	Female	Special Education

Interviews

Participation in the study included a one-time interview. Participants were given a few dates and times for the interview, and they chose the final specifications for the inter-

view. Eleven people returned a consent form, but only 10 people scheduled an interview and were participants in the study. The duration between the first and last interviews lasted two months and three days.

The interview protocol provided in Chapter 3 was followed for each interview. Interviews were recorded using the Photo Booth application on a MacBook computer with participant permission. The video option in the Photo Booth application was disabled. After the interviews, the videos were hand transcribed using Google Docs. Participants were sent the typed transcriptions and asked to edit for clarity and meaning. Seven out of the 10 participants responded with no changes or sent edits. Participants were emailed a five-dollar gift card as an incentive. Participants were exited from the study once they checked the transcripts and replied with edits or no changes.

Data Variations

Initially, the gatekeeper stated that school principals had to approve of the study before teachers could be asked to participate. However, one school switched principals during data collection. The former principal approved of the study and the interview was conducted. Therefore, the gatekeeper was contacted and asked that the teacher was able to participate without the current principal's prior consent. The gatekeeper allowed the interview, but required that the current principal be emailed. Eventually, the current principal gave consent, but it was after the interview had already been conducted. Neither the principal nor the gatekeeper were aware of the identity of the participant. The Walden

University Internal Review Board (IRB) was contacted about this matter and found that the situation led to minimal risk to the participants.

Unusual Circumstances

During data collection, maintaining confidentiality was difficult. Participants within the same school potentially knew about each other's participation status, but they never knew each other's responses. The Walden University IRB stated that participants were put at risk because their principal could have wanted to know more about their involvement in the study. However, the risk was minimal and the data obtained was still sufficient for the research study. Also, some participants discussed the study with non-participants, making it challenging to keep participant identities confidential. Finally, many participants told the school office that I was coming to visit them. Because I had sent out an email to all teachers within the building, many staff members knew the purpose of visiting with the teachers. Before the interview, participants understood that their responses would not identify them. Again, Walden University IRB approved due to the minimal risk present against participants.

The plan was for all interviews to be conducted within the participants' classrooms. However, four participants elected to hold their interviews outside of their classrooms, for more privacy. Two participants elected to have their interviews in locations not pre-approved by Walden University IRB. It was inferred that the participants were seeking additional confidentiality measures during the data collection process. One interview was conducted at a local fast-food restaurant. The participant felt most comfortable work-

ing there late at night. The other interview was conducted on the weekend at a local church where the participant serves in a leadership role. Walden University IRB was contacted about this matter. As a resolution, Walden University IRB allowed the data from these two participants, but recognized that the locations might have exerted minimal risk on the privacy of the interview.

Data Analysis

I thematically coded the transcripts from the interviews for information about how teachers use of DBRC with students with disabilities. After the end of each interview, I jotted down a few notes in the reflexive journal about how I felt the interview went and my thoughts on the interviewee's responses. Using Google Docs, I transcribed each audio-recorded interview. Next, I open-coded the text by using the highlight feature to highlight important phrases that were relevant to the research questions. Merriam and Grenier (2019) explained that the first step in constant comparative analysis is to open-code the data that was relevant to each research question. I labeled the important phrases as the initial codes of the data. As I was highlighting, I jotted down possible categories that were essential to that particular interview. These categories included "self-monitoring, interest-based, and learning opportunity."

I went through each transcript and identified pieces of text that fit the categories. Combining codes into categories helped me to find themes that explained the phenomenon of the research (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I repeated this process for every transcription, code, and category. Throughout the process, other categories emerged, in-

cluding: “consistency, frequency, and school-based rules” Finally, I went through each category and grouped them into different themes (see Table 2). The quotes from the participants supported the final themes, which became the findings of the study (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The overall themes then provided insight into how elementary teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities.

Table 2

Qualitative Analysis Codes

Color	Code	Category
Orange	“Visualize their progress” “Self-monitor themselves” “Shift and self-correct”	Self-Monitoring
Green	“Do a motivation menu” “Incentives based on whatever the kids want.” “Do an interest inventory” “Get them to want to do that”	Interest-Based
Magenta	“Teach more social skills” “Pre-teach those skills” “Increase appropriate behavior”	Learning Opportunity
Dark magenta	“Maybe need a reinforcement midday” “Sometimes iPad time at the end of the day” “Not like this is punitive”	Frequency
Dark red	“Base them ideally on building-wide expectations” “Incorporating school and class goals are important”	School-based Rules

Dark green	"I think having DPRs being part of a student's daily routine is helpful because then they just know what to expect." "So we do the same things, the same way because they feel safety in that" "Giving them that constant feedback so they know where they are."	Consistency

Discrepant Cases

While coding the transcripts, I noticed that some text contradicted the essence of the code. I made a contradictory column within each code to identify the statements that contradicted the rest of the evidence. Multiple participants made contradictory statements when speaking about their various experiences with DBRC. However, one participant, in particular, presented an experience that was contradictory to the other nine participants.

Results

I derived the data for this research study using the constant comparative analysis method. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019) constant comparative analysis occurred when the researcher compared the codes of one interview to another interview. The purpose of the method was to determine overall themes that explained the essence of the phenomenon (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Table 3 showcases the overall themes after multiple rounds of constant comparative analysis concerning the central and subsequent research questions.

Overall, elementary teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities to help students to make appropriate behavior choices. Initially, teachers provided students with much support by teaching them through difficult situations. Students were motivated by positive reinforcers that were related to their interests. Eventually, students begin to become self-aware of their behavior, and teachers faded their support. Teachers also set behavioral criteria for students based on the school's rules and expectations. Teachers differentiated behavioral rules based on individual student's needs. Finally, teachers collaborated with families and administrators to ensure that students maintained a consistent daily routine and constant feedback based on their DBRC- related behavior.

Table 3

Data Themes Based on Research Questions

Research questions	Data categories	Data themes
Central Research Question: How do elementary teachers, in a mid-western school district, use DBRC to support the behavior management of students with disabilities?	Self- monitoring Learning opportunity	Changing student behaviors through faded supports leading into student self-awareness
Subquestion 1: How do elementary teachers create rules and expectations when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?	School-based rules	Having consistent school-based rules and expectations

Subquestion 2: How do elementary teachers provide positive reinforcement and repetition when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?	Interest-based Frequency Consistency	Fading the type and frequency of interest-based reinforcement by providing consistency in the daily routine and feedback

Central Research Question

The central research question for the qualitative exploratory study was, “How do elementary school teachers in a mid-western school district use DBRC to support the behavior management of students with disabilities? Overall, elementary school teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities to help students learn to improve their behavior. Teachers analyzed a student’s DBRC and used opportunities for poor behavior as a learning opportunity. For example, if a student was struggling during math class, the teacher may have pre-taught math concepts to reduce math-related anxiety. Within the learning opportunity, teachers faded their support over time. When first starting a DBRC, teachers solely gave the student a score, without the student’s input into the store. As the student became more self-aware of their behavior, the student began to score their behavior. The teacher and the student compared their scores and had another learning opportunity about behavior and self-awareness. Elementary teachers used DBRC to teach students how to be self-aware of their behavior. Teachers also found learning opportunities where they could teach students how to cope with difficult decisions that resulted in the

student exhibiting undesirable behavior. Finally, teachers used DBRC as a progressive tool for students to become self-aware and learned how to assess and manage their behavior.

Category 1: Self-monitoring. Elementary teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities so that students could learn to self-monitor their behavior. Participant #1 used DBRC so that students could "visualize their progress" and "self-monitor themselves." Participants #1, #5, #2, and #9 had their older elementary students fill out their DBRC so that the students could "think about their behavior" and "really think about being more honest." The goal of DBRC for participant #2 was to "teach students how to self-manage." While participant #8 believed that DBRC "helps the kids keep track of their behavior for the day." Participant #6 added to the discussion by stating that using DBRC has helped students to "shift and correct" their behavior over time. Overall, most participants felt that DBRC was an excellent tool for students to learn to track and take responsibility for their behavior.

However, according to participant #10, sometimes DBRCs were negative triggers for students, and therefore they could not be used for self-monitoring purposes. The students focused more on their score and less on how they improved over time. "I think they trigger students, so typically, if I use them, I don't put them in a student's hands." Instead of tracking behavior using DBRC, participant #10 used a Google Form, that the student did not see. According to reflexive journaling entry, 11-26-19, I believed that participant #10's way of using DBRC may have been best for new teachers, but that it may not have

been as effective as the traditional way of using DBRC. However, participant #10 admitted that DBRC "is a good way to track behavior" but that "a lot of students with disabilities and behavior issues can't see past where they are right now." Most participants believed that DBRC helped students to self-monitor their behavior. In contradiction, one participant explained how DBRCs "are more detrimental then (sic) they are helpful," and they are not their preferred method of behavioral tracking.

Category 2: Learning opportunity. Elementary teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities as a learning opportunity for changing behavior. When the DBRC indicated that the student was having trouble in a specific subject area, teachers "use that to inform what [they are] working on" in the special education setting. Participant #1 explained, "The hope is that they take what they learn in [the special education room] and generalize those skills in other settings." Participant #4 believed that after teaching students how to behave in certain situations that the student will "make changes of behavior."

Participant #7 explained that when re-teaching, they "will model for the students what that appropriate behavior needs to be." Regarding the "re-teaching aspect of it," participant #5 did "some pre-teaching of those math skills," if the DBRC indicated that the student struggled consistently during math time. According to the reflexive journaling entry dated 10-17-19, I never considered looking at the DBRC data to determine if a student was misbehaving due to anxiety about a subject. The thought of pre-teaching a con-

cept to reduce anxiety-induced behavior was a new concept developed from the interviews.

Participant #6 also stated that DBRC provided a learning opportunity but through peer modeling. “So the fact that I would say something positive to another student, you would kind-of see their peers really shift and self-correct what they were doing.” According to the reflexive journaling entry dated 10-13-19, I agreed that using an intervention with a student with disabilities could potentially be successful for other students within the general education classroom. Overall the goal of DBRC usage with students with disabilities was to “increase appropriate behavior for the student,” and participant #7 explained that the teacher might need to “go back and reassess and maybe even change the behavior plan or the checklist.” Using DBRC as a learning opportunity helped students to become more self-aware of their behavior.

Key findings indicated that elementary teachers used DBRC to change student behaviors by fading teacher support, which led to student self-awareness of their behavior. I derived the theme for the central research question from the following categories: self-monitoring and learning opportunity.

Subsequent Question 1

The first subsequent question for the research study was, “How do elementary teachers create rules and expectations when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?” Elementary teachers structured the goals of students with disabilities’ DBRC based on the school rules. If a school used a school-wide PBIS frame-

work, then the teacher differentiated the school expectations to meet the needs of the student. The purpose of using school-wide rules was so that the student received consistent expectations across all school settings. Teachers still expected the student to be safe, responsible, respectful, and a problem-solver. However, the DBRC defined what safe looked like for the student individually. The students with behavior or executive functioning deficit may not have been able to meet the school's definition of being safe. Therefore, elementary teachers used DBRC to define safety expectations for that student. In summation, elementary teachers used school-wide rules to define acceptable behavior expectations for students with disabilities, as noted on their DBRC.

Category 3: School-based rules. Elementary teachers structured DBRC with students with disabilities based on school rules. Participant #4 differentiated school rules to meet the student's needs. "So maybe an overall school rule or school goal is to be safe, but for one student that might be keeping their chair on the floor or using materials appropriately." Participant #2 set DBRC goals "revolving around PBIS: being respectful, being responsible, [and] being safe." According to the reflexive journaling entry dated 9-25-19, the interview with participant #2 confirmed the connection between the conceptual framework, assertive discipline, and DBRC intervention. Primarily, teachers used assertive discipline and PBIS concepts to create differentiated rules to use on DBRC for students with disabilities.

Participant #9 explained why developing DBRC goals based on school-wide expectations was a successful idea. "I think makes it successful whenever they know that if

they go to the office if they go to their classroom teacher, if they go to specials, wherever it is going to be the same." Participant #4 also included "class expectations as well" played a part in creating goals for DBRC. However, the other nine participants did not mention using class-wide rules when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities.

The rules and expectations that elementary teachers had when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities were "very clear cut." According to participant #8, having clear cut expectations was "very important in kindergarten because kids come to school not knowing lots of behaviors." Due to the students' lack of behavioral skills, participant #10 tried "to have really specific targeted behaviors instead of just general classroom guidelines." Consistent expectations were relevant because the students "have known since the beginning; that is what that expectation is," and students could begin to "make it more of a habit." Participant #5 stated, "I want people to have an understanding of what each behavior that they are looking at and the criteria for each number." Overall, teachers created consistent rules that they based on the building rules to get students to change their behaviors.

Key findings indicated that elementary teachers had consistent rules and expectations based on building and classroom rules for students with disabilities. I derived the theme for subsequent question 1 from the "school-based rules" category.

Subsequent Question 2

The second subsequent question was, “How do elementary teachers provide positive reinforcement and repetition when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities?” Elementary teachers provided positive reinforcers based on the student’s interests. Teachers frequently administered interest inventories to students to ascertain, which interest-based reinforcer was the most effective in encouraging the student to make acceptable behavior choices. Teachers then changed the frequency at which they administered the positive reinforcement based on the student’s DBRC percentages. When first administering a DBRC with a student with a disability, the teacher administered the positive reinforcement frequently after the student exhibited acceptable behavior. Once the student continued to exhibit acceptable behavior, the teacher faded the frequency of the reinforcement in the hopes that the student did not need reinforcement to continue to exhibit acceptable behavior. Teachers also changed the type of behavior based on the student’s current interests.

Elementary teachers ensured that students who had a DBRC also had a repetitive daily schedule. A daily schedule reduced anxiety for the students because they were familiar with the routine. Teachers and other stakeholders in the students’ lives were consistent in their feedback to students. Teachers, parents, and administrators collaborated when structuring a DBRC for a student with a disability. The collaboration allowed the student to receive the same feedback and language across the school and home settings when they exhibited undesirable behavior. Participants believed that students were more likely

to exhibit desirable behaviors when parents, teachers, and administrators were consistent with their feedback to the student.

Category 5: Interest-based. Elementary teachers used interest-based positive reinforcement with DBRC to motivate students with disabilities to make appropriate behavioral choices. Before starting DBRC, Participants #5, #1, #9, #7, #3, #8, and #2 initiated an interest inventory with students. The interest inventories indicated that students generally wanted to earn candy, extra iPad time, ice cream with their family, or eating lunch with a teacher. Participant #8 explained that the interest inventory was necessary because "If they don't have something positive to work towards, they are going to get discouraged." According to reflexive journal entry dated 10-4-19, I recognized the importance of positive reinforcement for behavior change but struggled to implement them within my classroom consistently.

Participant #1 explained how interest inventories and DBRCs worked together, "But usually once they kind-of figure out, oh when I get smileys on my chart, good things happen. They kind-of start making those connections." The belief was that students would make appropriate behavior choices if they had a motivation piece. Participant #2 added, "When students were succeeding, they really wanted to continue to succeed."

The type of reinforcement that motivated students with disabilities to earn high scores on the DBRC was different for every student. For lower elementary students, participant #8 liked to have "have a variety of things that they get to choose." Participant #3 allowed students to "get a prize from the prize box." During a summer program, partici-

pant #6 used “going to the swimming pool each Thursday” as a motivator for first-grade students to achieve high scores on their Class Dojo DBRC. Participant #1 collaborated with students’ families, and families provided rewards such as “If they meet their goal every day that week, they will go out for ice cream on Fridays.” When rewarding upper elementary students, participants #2 and #7 indicated that “free time on the computer” and “candy” were sufficient reinforcement. All participants confirmed the goal of DBRC was to be used as a reward system and not as a punitive measure for behavioral change.

Some students were not motivated by DBRC, despite the inclusion of interest-based reinforcers, which was a challenge with the intervention. Participant #5 found that sometimes it was not very easy for the student to recognize what motivated them. Therefore, participant #1 added, “Sometimes it’s hard to get that buy-in.” Participant #10 again reported that they did not let students keep their DBRC throughout the day because it “triggers them.” Similar to the narrative that participant #10 presented, participant #9 explained that DBRCS made students “more anxious.” Participant #1 added, “Some students can be apathetic about DPRs.” Participant #4 added that students “don’t like the stigma of walking around with the chart.” Ultimately, “If a kid didn’t care, then none of it mattered,” according to participant #2. DBRC had the potential to motivate students to make behavioral changes, but the motivation component was not present for all students.

Some elementary teachers found that it was difficult to motivate their co-teachers to participate in using DBRC with students with disabilities. For participant #5, the purpose of using DBRC with students with disabilities was because “I want it to be filled out

and followed." Participant #9 explained that DBRC, "will only be effective in the rooms or in the locations where the person has their full heart into it." Participant #10 added, "If you have a teacher who is not organized, you can get them not filled out." However, participant #4 provided a remedy by helping "other teachers use them." Participant #1 "will talk with the teacher." Ultimately, according to participant #9, "The classroom teacher has to be on board." Therefore, elementary teachers have to work towards motivating classroom teachers into completing DBRC, and one remedy was to keep the lines of communication open.

Category 6: Frequency. Elementary teachers differentiated the frequency of positive reinforcers related to using DBRC with students with disabilities. Participant #5 provided students with positive reinforcement when they got their DBRC filled out by their teachers. "A lot of times, there is a reward at the end of the day if you just got it filled out." According to the reflexive journal entry dated 10-4-19, I struggled to provide rewards for students for completing tasks that they were supposed to do. However, participant #5 also recognized the importance of rewarding students earlier in the day so that they could feel successful. "It may be earlier in the day so that they can see that success." Participant #1 varied the frequency of positive reinforcers based on the student's needs. "I do have to tie a reinforcement either multiple times throughout the day or at the end of the day."

When working with kindergarten students, participant #8 created a "goal just for the whole week" and reinforced students at the end of the school week. Regardless of

when the teacher presented the reinforcer, participant #4 believed, “that positive reinforcement is always needed.” Therefore, elementary teachers differentiated when they were positively reinforcing appropriate behavior related to DBRC scores based on their students’ individual needs.

Category 7: Consistency. When thinking about repetition when using DBRC with students with disabilities, many teachers interpreted repetition to mean consistency. Participant #4 explicitly stated, “I guess with repetition, I think consistency.” Teachers provided consistency in a student’s daily routine to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention. Participant #4 stated, “I think having DBRCs being part of a student’s daily routine is helpful because then they just know what to expect.” Participant #6 added that the goal was to move students “from rule knowledge to behavior.” Teachers educated students on how to make appropriate behavior choices consistently throughout their daily routines. Participant #8 explained why a consistent daily routine is critical for DBRC success. “So we do the same things, the same way because they feel safety in that.” Overall, elementary teachers have found DBRC to be effective with students with disabilities if the intervention was a part of a consistent daily routine.

Elementary teachers used consistency in the feedback that they provided students based on the DBRC scores. Participant #2 shared an experience, “I actually enjoyed being able to give them that daily feedback that was positive or they needed to try again.” That consistent feedback was valuable, “so they know where they are.” Participant #3 specified when students received feedback on their behaviors. “I always call them over in

between each time period so that I have that repetition piece of looking at it." According to participant #9, constant feedback was beneficial for attention-seeking students. "Especially for attention-seeking children, it gives them that 12 times a day check-in with a teacher." Teachers used DBRC to provide feedback to the students and themselves. According to participant #6, the teacher had to "continuously evaluate whether it is working or if my action plan is not working." Overall, elementary teachers used DBRC to provide feedback to students and adults about the student's behavioral progression. More specifically, teachers found success with students who exhibited attention-seeking behaviors because of the repetitive check-in process associated with the use of DBRC.

Elementary teachers expressed that having consistent or repetitive language when giving feedback made the DBRC intervention more successful. According to participant #3, "If we can get everybody on the same page and using that common language to help boost that kid along a little bit faster." Participant #1 and #5 specifically used "'I can' student-friendly language." Whereas participant #4 made sure that there was a "consistency of language that is being reinforced throughout the day." One way that teachers were ensuring consistency of language was by collaborating with families, other teachers, administrators, and students. Participant #3 had open discussions with families about the language they used at home. "What kind of language do you use at home? Let's try to see if we can melt those together or use the same ones." The consistent feedback and language that traveled with a student across home and school settings was another component of DBRC implementation with elementary students with disabilities.

Key findings indicated that teachers faded the frequency of interest-based reinforcement. Teachers also provided repetition or consistency in the student's daily routine and feedback to the student across multiple settings. I derived the theme for the second subsequent question from the following categories: interest-based, frequency, and consistency.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Participants received an emailed a copy of their transcripts. The school district of focus exported external email addresses to the spam folder. Therefore, I had to email some participants several times before they were aware that their transcripts were ready to be approved. After several months of emails, all participants approved of their transcriptions. Member checking was essential because it ensured that I did not bias the participants' opinions about DBRC (see Morse, 2015). Three out of the ten participants emailed back changes or added clarifying information. The other seven participants approved the transcripts, as is. The transcripts were open-coded using Google Docs and Google Sheets software. I engaged in reflexivity journaling before, during, and after data collection. I emailed all participants and the gatekeeper an executive summary once the committee approved of the final dissertation.

Transferability

Evidence of transferability occurred through thick descriptions and reflexive journaling. The participants provided thick descriptions of their experiences with structuring

and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. I used the thick descriptions to determine the themes of teacher usage of DBRC. I engaged in reflexive journaling before, during, and after data collection. I compared the reflexive journaling to the transcripts to ensure the data came from the interviews, not the journaling.

Dependability

There was one slight adjustment made to the dependability strategy stated in Chapter 3. During the data collection process, I reviewed the data collection procedure to ensure that I achieved dependability measures (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The university research reviewer assigned to this dissertation reviewed the data collection and analysis procedures before publication. As a novice researcher, I engaged in extra precautions to ensure that the results were not biased by my previously held beliefs. Those precautions included audio-recording the interviews and checking the transcripts against the audio. I also engaged in reflexive journaling to ensure that my thoughts were separate from the participant's experiences with structuring and administering DBRC. Results of the dependability measures indicated that the research was derived from the data and not researcher bias.

Confirmability

Before data collection, I acknowledged my previous use of DBRC with students with disabilities. Before data collection, I had approximately one school year worth of experience with using DBRC with students with disabilities. I had a favorable view of DBRC but was not knowledgeable about the extent of the intervention. Throughout the

interviewing process, the previously held beliefs about DBRC changed to align more with the interviews. I began to recognize the importance of looking for data patterns and issuing interest-based positive reinforcement.

The themes emerged from the interviews and influenced my previously held beliefs about DBRC usage. Overall, I now have a more positive view of DBRC due to the data collection and analysis process. Reflexive journaling confirmed that the previous beliefs did not taint the research. Previously, I did not have a lot of knowledge about DBRC, and the interviews provided me with new knowledge. The new knowledge changed some of my opinions about the use of DBRC with students with disabilities. At the time of interviewing, I did not have enough knowledge about the DBRC intervention to influence the participant's answers. The participants' answers and the subsequent data analysis were derived solely from participants' experiences and not my opinions.

Summary

Chapter 4 included a discussion of the setting, data collection procedures, data analysis and results, and evidence of trustworthiness. The central research question indicated that elementary teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities to change student behaviors through faded supports leading to student self-awareness through self-monitoring. The first subsequent research question led to the theme that teachers created consistent school-based rules and expectations. Finally, the second subsequent question indicated a theme that teachers faded the type and frequency of interest-based reinforcement by providing repetition in the daily routine and feedback. I used three tables to illus-

trate the demographics and findings. Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of the findings, limitations to the study, recommendations for practice and future research, and implications of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study was to understand how elementary school teachers in a mid-western school district structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. More specifically, the research focus included how teachers applied components of Canter's (1989) assertive program to DBRC implementation. Many researchers studied the effectiveness of DBRC and students with disabilities. However, there was a research-to-practice gap in that some elementary teachers do not use DBRC, or use them without fidelity. Conley, Kittelman, Massar, and McIntosh (2018) found that only 3% of students in American schools participated in the DBRC intervention. Much of the literature on DBRC discussed the effectiveness of the intervention. However, the literature never explicitly asked teachers about their experiences with using the intervention with students with disabilities. Therefore, Pyle and Fabiano (2017) suggested that future research focus on teachers' usage of DBRC. The findings of the current study add to the current body of literature on DBRC by solely focusing on teachers' experiences with structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities.

I conducted 10 semistructured interviews with elementary teachers who had experience with structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. Key findings of the study indicate three themes related to teachers' usage of DBRC with students with disabilities: (a) to change student behaviors through faded supports leading into student self-awareness, (b) to establish consistent school-based rules and expectations, and (c) to fade the type and frequency of interest-based reinforcement by providing repetition

in the daily routine and feedback. The findings fill in the research-to-practice gap about how some teachers used DBRC with students with disabilities and provide reasons why some teachers do not use the intervention.

Interpretation of the Findings

The key findings of the study related to teachers' usage of DBRC with students with disabilities were: (a) to change student behaviors through faded supports leading into student self-monitoring, (b) to establish consistent school-based rules and expectations, and (c) to fade the type and frequency of interest-based reinforcement by providing repetition in the daily routine and feedback. The following sections include an interpretation of the study's results related to the literature review presented in Chapter 2 and the conceptual framework, Canter's assertive discipline program.

Related to the Literature

Faded supports into self-monitoring. The findings of the study support the literature indicating that teachers use DBRC to improve student behavior. According to Weber, House Rich, and Duhon (2019), the purpose of the CICO program was to provide a tier 2 behavioral intervention for at-risk students. Teachers provide tier 2 interventions to students who do not respond to tier 1 core instruction, and therefore the students need small-group instruction to target their specific behavioral needs (Tichá & Abery, 2018). The findings support the literature by adding that teachers fade their supports until students eventually become self-aware of their behavior. Miller, Dufrene, Olmi, Tingstrom, and Filce (2015) found that fading into self-monitoring aided students in maintaining

their behavioral gains with the DBRC intervention. MacLeod, Hawken, O'Neill, and Bundock (2016) found that including a self-monitoring component decreased the prevalence of problem behaviors for students who used function-based interventions. Participant #9 clarified that the function of the behavior for many students that used DBRC was attention-seeking. Teachers use the traditional checklist component of DBRC to monitor behavior. Then, teachers in the study analyze the checklists daily and used the data as learning opportunities. Eventually, students begin to use the DBRC to monitor their behavior alongside their teachers.

Established consistent rules. Teachers in the study establish consistent rules based on school-wide expectations when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. In a school-wide multi-tiered system of behavior support, DBRC encompassed the second tier of supports (Maggin, Zurheide, Pickett, & Baillie, 2015). However, teachers walk a thin line between having consistent expectations and risking explosive student behavior. According to Mitchell, Adamson, and McKenna (2017), a core principle of DBRC was to have clearly defined behavioral expectations. However, Owens et al. (2018) found that teachers should consider the student's developmental stage when responding to student behavior. Therefore, there was a need for teachers to provide consistent routines while considering the student's development and related-disabilities when using DBRC.

Fade the type and frequency of reinforcers. Teachers in the study fade the type and frequency of student interest-based reinforcers by providing repetition in the daily

routine and feedback. McDaniel and Bruhn (2016) acknowledged that increasing the daily percentage goal, which changed the reinforcement schedule, did result in behavior maintenance over time. The current study adds that changing the reinforcement schedule without changing the daily goal also allows for behavior maintenance. Myers et al. (2017) added that providing specific feedback alongside the consistent routines and expectations helped to maximize a successful classroom management plan. The findings of the study indicate that teachers provid specific feedback to students multiple times of the day. The study extends the literature by adding that the feedback is consistent from home to school. Teachers in the study believe that having consistent feedback through all settings is a critical factor in the successful implementation of DBRC with students with disabilities.

Related to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the current study was derived from Canter's (1976) assertive discipline program. Canter (1989) believed that effective classroom management was a result of a teacher's pre-planned discipline plan. The discipline plan included three major components: (a) concise rules and expectations, (b) positive reinforcement for acceptable behavior, and (c) repetition (Canter, 1989). Based on Canter's beliefs of an effective discipline plan, teachers include all three components to achieve success when using DBRC with students with disabilities.

A consistent finding among the participants confirms that establishing concise rules and procedures, as suggested by the assertive discipline program, is necessary for

effective use of DBRC with students with disabilities. Canter (1989) stated that master teachers established clear rules and procedures, and taught those rules to the students. When using DBRC, teachers establish behavior goals for the student, and model for the student how to achieve those goals. Teachers further extend Canter's suggestion by stating that they use student misbehavior as learning experiences. In assertive discipline, teachers provided the student with negative consequences when they misbehave (Canter, 1989). When using DBRC, teachers only reinforce good behavior positively, and disruptive behaviors are strictly learning opportunities. Canter's (1976) version of assertive discipline suggested that teachers place students' names on the board when they behaved. However, in 1989, Canter revised this suggestion and instead told teachers to use a checklist for misbehavior. Teachers in the study use a version of the checklist to track student behavior on DBRC.

Positive reinforcement plays a significant part in teachers structuring and administering of DBRC with students with disabilities. Canter (1989) explained that the key to a successful classroom management program was positive reinforcement for good behavior. When students reach their DBRC goal, they receive a positive reinforcer. Some teachers reinforce behavior based on the student's interests. For example, a student may receive extra iPad time or a piece of candy. Other teachers positively reinforce good behavior based on the function of the student's behavior. For example, an attention-seeking student may earn lunch with a preferred adult.

Teachers use Canter's positive reinforcement component of assertive discipline and differentiated based on the needs of the student. When using assertive practices, teachers should praise every student daily (Canter, 1989). Even when students do not meet their daily DBRC goals, teachers praise the portions of the day they were successful. For example, after reviewing the data, teachers praise a student for having a good morning or earning a high score in a subject that was usually difficult for them.

DBRC was a tier 2 intervention and used for students who were not successful with tier 1, whole-group interventions (Bundock, Hawken, Kladis, & Breen, 2019). Teachers present the positive reinforcement associated with DBRC usage in a personal manner, where Canter inferred that positive praise under assertive discipline was public. Overall, teachers use positive reinforcement when successfully structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. Unlike Canter's general and publicized praise, teachers instead provide more differentiated, interest-based reinforcement to encourage appropriate student behavior.

Some teachers in the study interpreted Canter's idea of repetition as maintaining consistency within the student's daily routine. Canter's (1989) idea of repetition focused on reinforcing the positive behavior that teachers expected of students. Teachers furthered Canter's idea, by adding that repeated review of the routine, alongside consistent feedback encompassed repetition. Canter's definition of repetition slightly blurs into his implication of positive reinforcement. Teachers in the study distinguished the two concepts. Teachers interpreted repetition to refer to the consistency that they used when addressing

student behavior. Teachers interpreted positive reinforcement as the rewards that students received when they met their daily DBRC goal. The findings of the study provide a more explicit definition of components of assertive discipline.

Limitations of the Study

Qualitative exploratory research had some natural limitations due to its subjective nature. Participants shared their experiences with using DBRC, and there was no way to verify that they expressed real accounts. There was a potential that participants expressed the idea that they believed I would like to hear. Despite knowing the confidentiality procedures, participants could have expressed experiences that they felt were favorable to their job position or the school district as a whole. Opsal et al. (2016) confirmed that qualitative research participants sometimes feared that their superiors would identify them, or they would cause problems for themselves or others. Seven out of the ten participants returned their transcripts without edits, potentially indicating that they did not thoroughly review their initial responses. According to Morse (2015), allowing participants to review their transcripts helped to establish transferability in a qualitative study. Again, there was no way to verify that participants engaged in member-checking truly. Therefore, there may have been underlying limitations to the credibility of the study that I was not made aware.

During the interview, participants described their experiences with structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. Some participants provided thick descriptions about their experiences, while other participants only provided a surface

view. Thick descriptions ensured that the results of the study were transferable to other related areas of research (Hadi & Closs, 2016). All of the participants currently or formerly have worked as an elementary teacher in a school district in the mid-west. Some of their experiences may have transferred to other school districts, and some of their experiences may have countered a school district with different demographics. The purpose of qualitative exploratory research was to gain a better understanding of the participant's experiences, not to compare their experiences with others. Therefore, the use of thick descriptions and reflexive journaling aided in transferability, but it was not the goal of the study.

There were no limitations to the dependability of the study. The doctoral committee assigned by Walden University reviewed the dissertation on numerous occasions, and I made the appropriate changes. A special education director, a behavior specialist, a learning specialist, and a behavior intervention specialist, all of whom were not participants in this study, reviewed the interview questions before the interviews. I never expressed personal opinions about the use of DBRC with participants to ensure dependability. Also, reflexive journaling ensured that researcher bias did not taint the findings of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Researchers conducted an extensive amount of research on the effectiveness of the DBRC intervention (Iznardo et al., 2017; Laging et al., 2018; Mires et al., 2017). Iznardo et al. (2017) and Pyle et al. (2017) indicated that the body of research needed to

expand on how teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. Riden et al. (2017) and Wolfe et al. (2016) also stated a need for additional research on how adults maintained positive results of DBRC and the barriers to implementing DBRC with fidelity. Research showed that teachers structured and administered DBRC in a digital or a paper-pencil form (Riden et al., 2019). The focus of the current study was to explore how teachers maintained positive results and the barriers to implementing DBRC with students with disabilities. In the study, the participants provided insight into how they achieved success with DBRC. The results of the study were essential in understanding why teachers do not use DBRC effectively.

Recommendations for future research include interviewing teachers in school districts within other geographical locations. Future research could also focus on the experiences of middle and high school teachers within the school district of focus. Researchers could compare the experiences from the various grade-levels to determine if there was an overall experience that teachers had with structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. The purpose of the current study was to understand what component repetition played in the structuring and administering of DBRC. However, the participants interpreted the word to mean consistency, which was slightly different from Canter's version of repetition. Therefore, future research could focus on why teachers interpreted repetition as consistency or if repetition played a role in DBRC usage. Finally, future research could include a case study where a researcher tracked the process of structuring and administering DBRC through a participant-observer role. Research in these

areas will provide a broader lens of the teachers' experiences and perceptions of DBRC usage with students with disabilities.

Implications

The purpose of the qualitative exploratory study was to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. Findings from the data collection indicate that teachers in the school district of focus use DBRC to (a) change student behaviors through faded supports leading into student self-awareness, (b) establish consistent school-based rules and expectations, and (c) fade the type and frequency of interest-based reinforcement by providing repetition in the daily routine and feedback. Generally, teachers had positive experiences, but there were drawbacks to using DBRC with students with disabilities.

Based on the results of the interviews, several implications for practice have been made to decrease the research-to-practice gap in that some elementary teachers do not use DBRC, or use them without fidelity. Implications include a detailed plan on how to structure DBRC with students with disabilities and ensured the intervention was administered with fidelity. The detailed plan could promote positive social change within the school district of focus and for teachers interested in the DBRC intervention.

When encountering a student with a disability affecting the areas of executive functioning or behavior, a teacher should go through a process before implementing DBRC with the student. First, the teacher should "observe the student in their regular class or other school settings" and look for "the performance deficits or the skills

deficits." Participant #5 explained the pre-planning process when tracking behaviors with DBRC. "I start with either their IEP goal or their behavior intervention plan (BIP), and I try to desegregate exactly what information that I am looking for." Participant #3's behavior tracking process is a bit different. They explained "I make my plan and choose my goal and so whenever I start seeing a behavior, a negative behavior that I'm thinking is going to be, that I am seeing more frequently than I feel like I should, then I start tracking it that way." Ultimately, the first step was to observe the student by looking for negative behaviors.

Next, the teacher should establish clear rules and expectations that the student should follow regarding their DBRC. The rules and expectations should be based on the building rules so that the expectations are consistent across all school settings. Even though the rules are consistent, the teacher should recognize when to provide grace to the student. Participant #6 explained, "I think that it is important to consider the limitations of your students." When establishing rules and expectations, the teacher should also ask the student what reward they want when they meet their daily behavior goal.

According to the participants in the study, including a positive reinforcement component with DBRC encouraged students to meet their daily behavior percentage. The teacher should base the rewards on the student's current interests. Participant #1 encouraged new teachers to use an interest inventory to learn which reinforcers may motivate students positively. Participants also suggest that teachers collaborate with families and other teachers before implementing DBRC with students with disabilities.

Elementary teachers collaborate with families, co-teachers, administrators, and students when structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities. Participant #6 uses Class Dojo, an electronic DBRC, to collaborate with parents. “when students received positive feedback, the parents would be able to see it. I did not allow parents to look at the negative points.” Participant #5 explains the reason why parents would not see the negative points. “So what I’ve always told parents is if you get this, I want you to celebrate the successes of the day.” The purpose of DBRC is to change student behavior through positive reinforcement. Participant #5 adds, “What I don’t want it to become though when I work with parents, is something punitive at home.” Participants #3, #4, #2, #9, and #1 send DBRC home daily so that families can provide positive reinforcement. However, some parents are not interested in seeing their student’s DBRC daily. According to participant #9, “They don’t really want to see it every single day. They don’t want me to text them a picture of it.” In that instance, teachers “graph the data and bring it to conferences or IEP meetings to talk about progress over time.” DBRC lends itself to being a daily home-school communication tool, but some teachers adapt to parent preferences and communicate on a less frequent basis.

Collaborating with co-teachers is essential to the effectiveness of using DBRC with students with disabilities. The purpose of the DBRC intervention is “to help students, teachers, and parents keep track of how the student’s day is going.” Participant #10 ensures the DBRC goes from “adult-to-adult and [the scores] are reviewed with the student.” Therefore, teacher-to-teacher collaboration is essential. Participant #6 teaches with

a co-teacher, and they collaborate on how they use the Class Dojo application for behavior tracking. When students progress in their self-monitoring skills, participants #1and #2 have the student and their regular education teachers to simultaneously track the students behavior. “Teachers can agree or disagree with the student’s rating. If the teacher disagrees, they have a short conference with the student.” Therefore, the collaboration also occurs between teachers and students when using DBRC.

Structuring and administering DBRC with students with disabilities requires special education and general education teachers to collaborate. Participant #5 believes that general education teachers struggle “if they have multiple kids coming and going with different DBRCs.” Participant #1 adds that special education teachers also struggle. “It can be very overwhelming, especially if you have several kids with them.” Participant #4 corroborates, stating, “sometimes getting consistent teacher feedback on getting them filled out.” Therefore, filling out DBRC is not a special vs. general education teacher issue; it is an issue for all types of teachers. Participant #4 also explains that “Some teachers understand the value and are really great at filling them out.” For participant #5, the ultimate goal is to get “Everyone on the same page and making sure that you are getting complete data.” The process of getting all teachers to fill out the DBRC accurately is a challenge related to the intervention.

Teacher and student communication is an iterative process when using DBRC with students with disabilities. Participant #2 states that the teacher have “a meeting with the kid about exactly how this is going to work.” Participant #6 has “a conversation about

what goals they needed to work on" for that day. If the teacher and student scores disagree, then the teacher have "a short conference with the student to talk about what they saw the student doing that didn't match the score the student gave themselves." Finally, the students "were required to come and check-out with us." Consequently, the teachers and students communicate about the student's behavior multiple times throughout the day.

All participants express various challenges with using DBRC with students with disabilities. The key challenges are DBRC can be time-consuming, and hard to get all teachers on board. According to participant #3, DBRC are "time-consuming," and participant #1 adds because it is "a lot of data collection/input and papers to manage." DBRC require that teachers complete the checklist and input the data daily. Participant #8 adds that DBRC are time-consuming during the day, "You can easily forget about it, and you haven't filled it out in two hours, and then you have to try to think back." Participant #4 adds, "Sometimes it can be a challenge -- of course maintaining all of the information."

According to participant #1, "If I miss a day or two, it can be difficult to get caught back up." Participate #5 adds another perspective related to DBRC being time-consuming. "I think it gets tricky is when it becomes mundane. You are not really looking at it. You are just filing it away and writing an end score. Then it becomes just another piece of paper to shuffle." Participant #3 advises teachers who are interested in using DBRC "Prepare yourself and make sure that you are really ready to put in the time." El-

ementary teachers mostly have positive experiences with DBRC, but they warn that without proper organization, DBRC can become an inefficient, time-consuming process.

Conclusion

Many studies have focused on proving that DBRC was an effective intervention for decreasing undesired behaviors. Despite the proven effectiveness of DBRC, some teachers were not using DBRC, or they were not using them with fidelity. I devised one research question and two subsequent questions to explore how elementary teachers structured and administered DBRC with students with disabilities. The results of the study provided new insight into the pre-planning process that teachers went through before implementing DBRC. Recommendations for future research included exploring middle and high school teachers' experiences. Implications for practice included a detailed plan of how to begin implementing DBRC and how to avoid common challenges with the intervention. The findings of the study could enact social change by encouraging the school district of focus to promote the use of DBRC with fidelity. The study promoted equality, despite the presence of a disability, and an improvement in overall inclusive classroom management.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Structured Research Questions:

1. In your opinion, what are “daily behavior report cards”?

2. Tell me about your experiences with daily behavior report cards with students with disabilities.

3. What went well with structuring and administering daily behavior report cards?

4. What were some of the challenges with structuring and administering daily behavior report cards?

5. Tell me about your thoughts on positive reinforcement.

6. Tell me about your thoughts on rules and expectations. What rules and expectations have you established with daily behavior report cards?

7. What advice do you have for a teacher who is interested in using DBRC with students with disabilities?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the use of DBRC?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

1. How has your use of daily behavior report cards assisted you in managing the behaviors of students with disabilities?

2. How has your use of daily behavior report cards prevented you from managing the behaviors of students with disabilities?

3. When you use rules and expectations?

4. Why do you use rules and expectations?

5. When you use positive reinforcement and repetition?

6. Why do you use positive reinforcement and repetition?