Fostering Reading Motivation in Self-Contained Classrooms for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

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Abstract

This study sought to explore and describe the extent to which research based practices were employed for cultivating an environment that fostered reading motivation in self-contained classrooms for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). To accomplish this, a descriptive multiple case study design was employed in which data were collected in three self-contained elementary classrooms for students with EBD. Findings suggested that the environment for learning in these classrooms has likely not changed much since Jane Knitzer's classic study in 1990. This study serves as a call to researchers and teacher educators to increase attention on the education and treatment of children and youth with EBD being served in self-contained classrooms.

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A broad literature base continues to document the poor academic outcomes of children and youth with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) (Anderson, Kutash, & Duchnowski, 2001; Blackorby & Wagner 1996; Carran, Murray, Kellner, & Ramsey, 2014; Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004; Prince, Hodge, Bridges, & Katsiyannis, 2017; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2006; Wehby, Lane, & Falk, 2003; Wiley, Siperstein, &Forness, 2011). In response to these poor outcomes, some recent recognition has been given to the importance of supporting behavioral and academic needs of students with EBD simultaneously (e.g., Anderson et al., 2001; Lane, Barton-Arwood, Nelson, & Wehby, 2008; Maggin, Wehby & Gilmore, 2016; Wiley et al., 2011; Wehby et. al, 2003). In fact, there appears to be increased focus on identifying effective practices and strategies in a range of academic areas for this population of students (e.g., Burke, Boon, Hatton, & Bowman-Perrot, 2015; Losinski, Cuenca-Carlino, Zablocki, & Teagarden, 2014; Mulcahy, Krezmien, & Travers, 2016). However, more research is needed to understand how to effectively teach this population of students in the context of the self-contained classroom.

Arguably, students with EBD who are served in self-contained settings have the most intensive needs and are the hardest to teach. Furthermore, teaching students with EBD in the self-contained classroom might be one of the most difficult teaching positions. Teachers who work in self-contained classrooms are faced with multiple demands while remaining responsible for designing and implementing curriculum, behavior intervention techniques, and for determining when students are ready to be included in general education (Bettini, Cumming, Merrill, Brunsting & Liaupsin, 2016; Bettini, Kimerlin, Park & Murphy, 2015; Grosenick, George, George & Lewis, 1991). The purpose of self-contained placements for students with EBD are to provide intensive academic and behavioral services that are not available in the general

education classroom setting (Lane, Wehby, Little, & Cooley, 2005). Although self-contained settings are meant to provide intensive services so students can make adequate progress, research has shown that academic and behavioral deficits continue to be a problem for students placed in these restrictive settings (Denny, Gunter, Shores, & Campbell, 1995; Lane et al., 2008; Lane et al., 2005; Mattison & Blader, 2013).

Literacy and Teaching Reading in Self-Contained Classrooms for Students with EBD

Academic success is hypothesized to be dependent upon learning how to read (Bost & Ricconmini, 2006; Chall, 1983; Kepe, Foncha & Maruma, 2017; Rivera, Al-Otaiba, & Koorland, 2006; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2014). Rivera and collegues (2006) pointed out, "Reading is the gateway to content area knowledge and the ability to complete grade level academic work" (pg. 323) and may also provide the basis for later academic achievement (Chall, 1983; Sparks et al., 2014). More specifically, the reading difficulties among children and youth with EBD have been well documented (Wanzek, Al Otaiba, & Petscher, 2014; Wei, Blackorby, & Schiller, 2011; Yakimowski, Faggella-Luby, Kim, & Wei, 2016). For example, students with EBD typically perform at one to two grade levels behind their peers in reading (Greenbaum, Dedrick, Friedman, Kutash, Brown, Lardierh et al., 1996; Nelson et al., 2004; Yakimowski et al., 2016). Additionally, it has been noted that these reading difficulties are associated with anti-social behavior. Thus, some evidence has suggested that improving academic achievement, particularly in the area of reading, may improve the social or classroom behavior of children with EBD (Lane, O'Shaughnessy, Lambros, Gresham, & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2001; Roberts, Solis, Ciullo, McKenna, & Vaughn, 2015).

Little is known about effective practices for teaching reading to students with EBD in the context of a self-contained classroom. To date, there are no studies that exist that examine practices that cultivate classroom environments in which student motivation to read is fostered, which is an equally important component of effective reading instruction (Capen, 2010; Gambrell, 2011). Given that students with EBD who are educated in self-contained classrooms receive their primary reading instruction in these settings, studies are needed that examine the cultivation of a learning environment that motivates students to read.

Gambrell (2011) posited seven research-based practices that collectively cultivate an environment that fosters motivation to read: 1) Instructional practices that focus on helping students find value and meaning in reading tasks and activities; 2) Utilizing literacy related incentives that reflect the value and importance of reading; 3) Providing students with opportunities to engage in sustained reading; 4) Providing students with opportunities to make choices about what they read; 5) Creating opportunities to socially interact with others about text; 6) Creating opportunities for students to experience progress and competence in reading; and 7) Having a literacy-rich classroom environment that invites students to engage in the rich literacy environment. These seven research-based practices were used as the framework for studying the classroom environments included as part of this study.

Using Gambrell's seven practices as an operational framework for investigating the self-contained classroom environment, this study sought to explore and describe the extent to which these research-based practices were employed for cultivating a classroom environment that

fostered reading motivation in self-contained classrooms for students with EBD. Thus, this study was driven by the following research question:

Research Question #1: To what extent are research-based practices for cultivating an environment that fosters reading motivation evident in self-contained classrooms for students with EBD?

Method

Selection of the Self-Contained Classrooms

Critical case sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, was the sampling technique used to select cases for this study (Patton, 2002). Cases were defined as elementary self-contained classrooms that served children with EBD. The following criteria had to be met in order to be included as a case in this study: 1) 60% or more of the student's instructional day was spent in the self-contained classroom setting; 2) both the classroom teacher and the special education director indicated that students were placed in the self-contained classroom setting for behavioral reasons; and 3) students were identified as having Least Restrictive Environment state codes that indicated self-contained placement. As such, self-contained classrooms were selected that were next on the continuum of placement options after students had been considered for special education services in the general education classroom or a resource classroom for a portion of the day.

To obtain a critical case sample for this study, and after IRB approval was received from the university, the researcher asked the state Department of Education (DOE) for a list of all special education directors in the state. Next, an email was sent to all special education directors, which explained the study and sought permission to recruit teachers in elementary self-contained classrooms for students with EBD. Recruitment emails were then sent to teachers. Three classrooms, located in three different educational regions of the state, were selected for this study in March 2015.

Description of Setting and Participants

Table 1 highlights the location and demographic information specific to the setting of each classroom. The researcher was not able to locate data at the school level for Case 2 on the state department of education website. This classroom is one of two elementary and two middle school special education classrooms located in the back of the district special education administration building. Case 1 was located in the west central educational region of the state. Case 2 was located in the east central educational region of the state, and Case 3 was located in the northwest educational region. Furthermore, the majority of students in the school in both Case 1 and Case 2 identified as white. In contrast, the majority of students in the Case 3 school identified as African American. A higher percentage of students received free/reduced lunch in the Case 3 school. The percentage of students who received special education services was relatively similar across all three cases. Case 1 and Case 3 had a graduation rate slightly lower than the state average of 90%. Finally, the percentage of students in the school who passed the statewide exam was at or slightly higher than the state average of 74.7% in Case 1 and Case 2, and slightly lower in Case 3.

Table 1
Location and Demographics Within Each Case

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Educational Region	West Central	East Central	Northwest
School Corporation(s)	n=4,486	n=20,924	n=7,566
White	93.6%	88.9%	.9%
Black or African American	.5%	1.37%	92.8%
Multiracial	2.9%	3.16%	3.9%
Hispanic	2.2%	4.61%	2.3%
Asian	.4%	1.75%	0%
Pacific Islander	0%	.11%	0%
Free/Reduced Lunch	40.9%	35.3%	80.2%
Special Education	12.5%	14%	14%
Passed ISTEP	77.7%	80.7%	47.7%
Graduation Rate	74.7%	90.7%	85.7%
Elementary School	n=324	NO DATA	n=524
White	90.1%		0%
Black or African American	.9%		92.6%
Multiracial	3.4%		6.4%
Hispanic	.4%		1%
Asian	.6%		
American Indian	.9%		
Free/Reduced	49.7%		93.8%
Special Education	16%		11%
Passed ISTEP	76.8%		71.1%

Table 2 includes the gender, grade levels, and disability categories for the students in each Case. Case 1 had five students all of whom were male. There was one kindergarten student, two first-grade students, one fourth-grade, and one-fifth grade student. The primary disability category for each of these students was Emotional Disturbance (ED), except for one, which was Other Health Impaired (OHI). Case 2 had seven students. Six of the seven students were male and one student was female. There were two kindergarten students, one first-grade student, and four second-grade students. One student had a primary disability category of ED; 3 OHI, and 3 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Two students identified as having ASD had a secondary disability category of ED. Lastly, Case 3 had a total of six students. Five of the six students were male and one student was female. There were three third grade students, two fourth grade students, and one sixth grade student. All students had a primary disability category of ED.

Table 2
Gender, Grade, and Disability Categories Within in Case

	Gender	Grade	Primary Disability	Secondary Disability
Case 1				
Student 1	M	Kindergarten	OHI	Speech Impairment
Student 2	M	1st Grade	ED	Speech Impairment
Student 3	M	1st Grade	ED	Speech Impairment
Student 4	M	4th Grade	ED	
Student 5	M	5th Grade	ED	ASD
Case 2				
Student 1	M	Kindergarten	OHI	
Student 2	M	Kindergarten	ED	
Student 3	M	1st Grade	OHI	
Student 4	F	2nd Grade	OHI	
Student 5	M	2nd Grade	ASD	
Student 6	M	2nd Grade	ASD	ED
Student 7	M	2nd Grade	ASD	ED
Case 3				
Student 1	M	3rd Grade	ED	
Student 2	M	3rd Grade	ED	
Student 3	F	3rd Grade	ED	
Student 4	M	4th Grade	ED	
Student 5	M	4th Grade	ED	
Student 6	M	6th Grade	ED	

Design of the Study

After IRB approval was received from the university, a descriptive multiple case study design (Patton, 2002) was employed in which data was collected from classroom observations, interviews, and the administration of the Classroom Literacy Environmental Profile (CLEP; Wolfersberger, Reutzel, Sudweeks, & Fawson, 2004) to answer the study research question. Each case was analyzed individually, followed by a cross-case analysis. A co-analyst was employed to assist with analyses. The primary analyst and the co-analyst first worked individually, analyzing data specific to the study research question and then met weekly to pool judgment and ensure similar and agreed upon findings.

Data Sources. Using Gambrell's (2011) identified research based practices as a framework in this study, data collected from the classroom observations was used to evidence the first six of Gambrell's indicated practices, while the CLEP was administered to evidence the seventh of Gambrell's practices. In addition, interviews were conducted with teachers after observations were complete as a secondary data source to strengthen findings. The interviews were guided by an interview protocol that focused on understanding teacher perceptions about their own beliefs and implementation of Gambrell's (2011) indicated practices. Thus, during analysis, interviews were used to triangulate data (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014) and support the findings yielded from observations and the CLEP. Collectively, the subsequent findings yielded rich information, grounded in data, about the extent to which research-based practices were employed for cultivating a classroom environment that fostered motivation to read.

Moreover, consistent with case study research designs, naturalistic observations were conducted to collect observational data by one member of the research team (Patton, 2005). A total of five consecutive full-day observations were conducted in each classroom. The number of observations used in this study was based on recommendations from the research literature (e.g. Levy, 2000; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2004). The researcher created an observation protocol, organized by time and activity, to guide field notes. For each observation session, the researcher first chronicled the start time of the observation and documented the associated activity the teachers and each student were engaged in at that moment. A new time was documented when one participant changed activities and notation was made indicating that all other participants were still engaged in the previous activity. This allowed for the main researcher and the co-analyst to review observation notes during analyses to gain a comprehensive understanding of the activities all participants were engaged in during each session. In addition, specific details related to praise given by teachers were recorded to ensure data was collected that evidence Gambrell's (2011) framework. Last, the researcher took reflective field notes (Mulhall, 2003) that included the researcher's impressions gathered during the observations that could be used to expand the observation field notes shortly after each observation session.

As mentioned, the seventh of Gambrell's (2011) research-based practices was evidenced through the administration of the Classroom Literacy Environmental Profile (CLEP; Wolfersberger, et al., 2004). The CLEP is an instrument for measuring the "literacy richness" and literacy environment of elementary classrooms. The CLEP is composed of 33 items and two subscales. Subscale 1 focuses on the quantity and organization of print materials and literacy tools available in the classroom. Subscale 2 focuses on spatial organization and literacy interactions using print

materials and literacy tools in the classroom and whether or not the materials are arranged to invite students to engage in the literacy environment. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert-type rating scale with 1 representing the lowest level of implementation and 7 representing the highest level of implementation. Pilot testing of the CLEP indicated that raters achieved acceptably low levels of error (0.10-0.05) and high levels of reliability (□=0.9) when rating the literacy richness of classroom environments. Thus, Wolfersberger et al. (2004) concluded that the CLEP is a reliable tool for evaluating the print richness of early childhood and elementary classrooms (Wolfersberger et al., 2004). The researcher administered the CLEP at a time when the students were not present in the room. In addition, the researcher took photographs of the classroom environment that were used to discuss and refine scores with the co-analyst as necessary.

Data Analysis. Both individual and cross-case analyses (Yin, 2014) were applied. Consistent with this approach, during the first phase of analysis, each individual case study was first treated as a "whole study" in that the research question was answered within each case first. Once each case was analyzed separately, during the second phase of analyses, individual case findings were then examined as part of the cross-case analysis. A co-analyst was employed in these analyses. This was a doctoral level student in special education who had experience working with students with EBD. The primary analyst and the co-analyst first worked individually, analyzing data specific to a particular research question and then met weekly to pool judgment and ensure similar and agreed upon findings.

More specifically, deductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008) was the analytic strategy used to analyze the data in relation to the study research question. First, instances of reading related activities were coded. For the purposes of this study, a reading related activity was defined as any task in which students were engaged with letters, words, or text material or the purpose of the activity was to facilitate reading achievement. After all reading related activities were coded, a structured categorization matrix (Patton, 2002) was generated, in which categories of the matrix were associated with the first six of Gambrell's (2011) identified practices. The identified reading related activities were then analyzed to determine if they fit within one of the categories of the matrix. The seventh of Gambrell's practices was evidenced through the administration of the CLEP. The evidence categorized within the matrix and the CLEP scores converged to answer the study research question within each case, which was related to the extent to which the environment was cultivated such that it fostered motivation to read.

To confirm the findings yielded from observations and administration of the CLEP, interview data was analyzed using a content analysis approach (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014) to confirm evidence and increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the study findings (Shenton, 2004). More specifically, within each case, the text from interview transcripts was analyzed and categorized into the aforementioned matrix to either support or refute the evidence supported by observations and the CLEP related to the presence of Gambrell's (2011) practices that cultivate an environment that fosters the motivation to read.

After completing the analysis of each individual case, a cross-case analysis was conducted in which findings were compared and contrasted across cases. Specifically, an array of findings from each case was created so that instances of replication or contrasting cases could be found

(Yin, 2014). To reduce redundancy, findings from the cross-case analysis are shared in this article.

Ensuring Credibility

Lincoln & Guba (1985) argued that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness because it deals with the whether or not the findings are congruent with reality. In this study, several strategies were used to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. First and foremost, to ensure accurate recording of responses, all interviews were recorded (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In addition, methods were used during each interview to ensure the honesty of participants (Shenton, 2004). For example, each participant was given the opportunity to refuse to participate and, from the outset of each interview session, was encouraged to talk frankly. The researcher attempted to establish rapport with participants and ensured them that their data would be held confidential. In addition, the researchers employed member checks (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005), in that each teacher was given their interview transcript to review and confirm accuracy (or inaccuracy). Second, the experience of the researcher added a level of credibility to study findings that cannot be ignored. Shenton (2004) noted the importance of the "backgrounded, qualifications, and experience of the investigator". Some researchers have suggested that trust in the researchers is of equal importance to the adequacy of the procedures themselves (Alkin, Daillak, & White, 1979). Thus, the researcher's experience working as a teacher for nine years in a self-contained setting for students with EBD heavily contributes to the credibility of study findings. Last, during analyses the primary data collector employed a co-analyst who participated in initial data coding, category construction, and confirmatory analyses of data. The co-analyst contributes to establishment of credibility and trustworthiness in the findings through pooled judgment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Results and Discussion

To review, data were categorized during analysis to yield findings related to the presence of research-based practices for cultivating an environment for reading motivation (Gambrell, 2011). Table 3 highlights the results across the three cases. In the following sections, the results and discussion are organized by each of Gambrell's (2011) indicated research-based practices, which were used as the framework for analyzing the extent to which these classroom environments were cultivated to foster student motivation to read.

Instructional practices that help students find value and meaning in reading tasks and activities

To evidence instructional practices that help students find value and meaning in reading tasks and activities, the content and purpose of reading related activities were analyzed to determine if connections were made, in some way, between the reading activity and the student. Specifically, connections to individual student interest or situational interest created by the teacher were examined. Across all three cases there was indeed evidence of this practice. However, in the majority of these instances, the connections made were not a result of instructional practices purposefully employed by the teacher, but more a result of the textbook material having a focus on common interests among the students being taught.

Utilization of reading related incentives that reflect the value and importance of reading
Across all three cases there was no evidence of reading related incentives that reflected the value and importance of reading. Reading related incentives are either tangible or non-tangible. Although research supports the use of tangible reading related incentives (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008; Small, Arnone, & Bennett, 2017), non-tangible incentives, such as reading specific praise, are often supported most empirically (Anthuis, 2014; Small et. al, 2017, Gambrell, 2011; Lepper & Cordova, 1992). There are several possible explanations for the absence of these incentives in all three cases. In terms of tangible rewards, one possible explanation might be lack of available funding to help support the purchase of reading related incentives, such as books and bookmarks. Another possible explanation, which was drawn from the researcher's reflective field notes particularly for Case 2 and Case 3, is that the absence of this practice could be associated with the intense focus on external rewards and incentives used to manage behavior. Such focus might prevent even the thought of providing tangible incentives specifically related to reading. Perhaps these teachers don't understand the influence providing incentives that value the importance of reading could have on both academic and behavioral outcomes simultaneously.

In terms of non-tangible rewards, a possible explanation might again, at least for Case 2 and Case 3, be the intense focus on behavior and implementing specific behavior management plans. It is possible that teachers are so conditioned to respond and provide feedback related to improving the behavior of their students, that they forget to provide reading-specific praise to motivate their students. More research is needed to fully examine the effects that classroom behavior management plans and various strategies have on implementing research based instructional practices.

Lastly, the teachers in these classrooms simply may not have received the necessary training to understand the importance of this practice or how to implement it. Regardless, it is recommended that professional development opportunities be provided to assist these teachers and ensure that all teachers understand the significance of this practice and how it contributes to creating an environment that motivates students to read.

Opportunities provided for students to engage in sustained reading activities
Evidence of sustained reading activities was identified in Cases 2 and 3; however, this evidence was minimal. Given that sustained reading instructional activities operate along a continuum (Atwell, 2007; Gambrell, 2007; Reutzel & Juth, 2014), in this study, a sustained reading activity was broadly defined to encompass common features. Thus, it was evidenced when students were observed reading text material independently for at least 15 minutes. The broad definition used in this study allowed the researcher to capture sustained reading activities that were not necessarily considered best practice. For example, all such observations that were collected as evidence were associated with a subsequent assignment. Some researchers have supported that sustained reading activities are most effective when they are not associated with an assignment (Atwell, 2007; Gambrell, 2007; Reutzel & Juth, 2014). Additionally, the students did not choose the books during the times in which sustained reading was evidenced. Some researchers argue that students should be allowed to choose the books that they are engaged with during sustained reading (Atwell, 2007; Gambrell, 2007; Reutzel & Juth, 2014). As discussed previously, it is possible that solid evidence of sustained reading activities was not evident because of the lack of a rich literacy environment in all three cases. It is likely that a need for quality books made it

more difficult for teachers and less motivating for students to make choices about what to read. It may also be possible that these teachers do not understand the value of sustained reading activities.

Table 3

Evidence of Research-Based Practices that Cultivate Environments that Foster Reading Motivation by Case

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Do instructional practices focus on helping students find value and meaning in reading tasks and activities?	• 3 of 5 activities showed evidence in which connections were made to the individual interest of the student. • Among 2 of 3 three activities, the connections made were not a result of instructional practices employed by the teacher, but more a result of the predetermined focus within the textbook material.	• 2 of 13 activities showed evidence in which connections were made to the individual interest of the student.	• 1 of 8 activities showed evidence in which connections were made to the individual interest of the student.
Are reading related incentives that reflect the value and importance of reading utilized?	• 0 evidence of students receiving tangible incentives that were related to reading.	• 0 evidence of students receiving incentives that reflect the value and importance of reading.	• 0 no evidence of students receiving incentives that reflect the value and importance of reading.
Are students provided with opportunities to engage in sustained reading activities?	• 0 activities that allowed students the opportunity to engage in sustained reading.	• 2 of 13 activities allowed students the opportunity to engage in sustained reading. Both of these activities consisted of a period of time in which students were engaged	• 1 of 8 activities allowed students the opportunity to engage in sustained reading.

		independently with the Raz-Kids program.	
Are students provided with opportunities to make choices about what they read?	• 0 opportunities in which students were purposefully given a choice about what to read.	• 0 opportunities in which students were purposefully given a choice about what to read.	• 0 opportunities in which students were purposefully given a choice about what to read.
Are opportunities created for students to socially interact with others about text being read?	• 3 of 5 activities related to reading provided an opportunity for students to socially interact with another person about the text they were reading. • However, in all three activities the social interaction was with the teacher who was facilitating a discussion related to the text.	• 4 of 13 activities related to reading provided an opportunity for students to socially interact with another person about the text they were reading. • However, in all four activities the social interaction was with the teacher who was facilitating a discussion related to the text. • Additionally, 1 of 4 activities engaged students socially in a negative experience.	• 3 of 8 activities related to reading provided an opportunity for students to socially interact with another person about the text they were reading. • However, in all three activities the social interaction was with the teacher who was facilitating a discussion related to the text.

Are there opportunities created for students to experience progress and competence in reading?	• 0 observed opportunities for students to experience progress and competence in reading.	• 1 of 13 activities related to reading provided an opportunity for students to experience progress and competence in reading. However, one student had a negative experience completing this activity and did not experience progress or competence.	• 0 observed opportunities for students to experience progress and competence in reading.
To what extent is the classroom environment literacy-rich such that students are invited to engage in the rich literacy environment?	• Subscale 1:3.5 out of 7, "minimal". • Subscale 2: 2.26 out of 7, "impoverished".	• Subscale 1: 3.55 out of 7, "minimal". • Subscale 2: 2.26 out of 7, "impoverished"	• Subscale 1: 2.27 out of 7, "minimal". • Subscale 2: 1.33 out of 7, "impoverished"

Lastly, sustained reading requires a certain level of stamina to remain actively engaged, by either reading or looking at pictures, and it might be difficult for this particular population of students. Thus, again, it is recommended that attention be paid to the number and quality of books in the self-contained classrooms as well as the professional development needs of the teachers who work in these classrooms, specifically in terms of literacy. Further research is needed to help these teachers with strategies to help students with EBD in self-contained settings build the necessary stamina required to engage in sustained reading activities.

Opportunities provided for students to make choices about what to read

Across all three cases there was no evidence that students were provided with opportunities to make choices about what to read. Allowing students to make choices is a powerful motivator (Parker, Novak, & Bartell, 2017; Rettig & Hendricks, 2000), particularly for students with EBD (Jolivette, Ennis, & Swoszowski, 2017; Shogren et al., 2004). A possible explanation for the absence of this practice could be that the richness of the literacy environment was lacking. In fact, the CLEP results in this study support this possibility, as scores revealed the literacy richness of the environment in all cases to be either "Minimal" or "Impoverished". Given the low score on the CLEP, it is very likely that there was not a wide variety of quality books and other text materials from which students could make choices. Thus, these teachers might not have felt it to be meaningful or motivating to have children choose from such a limited, low quality collection of books. Alternatively, again, these teachers simply may not have understood and valued the importance of allowing students opportunities to make choices about what they read. Regardless, a rich literacy environment is motivating and is needed to implement other practices, such as providing students with opportunities to make choices about what to read, specifically in self-contained classroom settings. Historically, professionals have focused on implementing practices to improve the behavior of students with EBD in self-contained settings (Bos, Coleman & Vaughn, 2002; Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1990; Rivera et al., 2006; Wehby et al., 2003; Wehby, Falk, Barton-Arwood, Lane & Cooley, 2003; Wehby & Kern, 2014). It is not surprising that perhaps little attention has or is being paid to these important environmental factors for improving academic achievement, specifically in the area of reading.

Opportunities provided for students to socially interact with others about text being read

Across all three cases there was indeed some evidence of students interacting socially with others about text, but in all instances, across all cases, the interaction was with an adult, not a peer. Furthermore, the interactions were typically comprised of a discussion related to helping the student comprehend the text to complete an assignment. Social interaction about text is thought to support motivation to read because it piques student's curiosity and promotes student interest and engagement (Turner and Paris, 1995; Rojas-Drummond, Mazon, Littleton, & Velez, 2012). Social interaction for the purposes of being able to complete an assignment or answer a question on a worksheet, arguably, does not pique students' curiosity nor promote student interest and engagement. Thus, one recommendation would be for opportunities to be purposefully created for students to socially interact about text, in more natural and conversational ways and with their peers, rather than adults. In fact, peer-mediated instruction is well supported in the literature to improve student engagement and academic achievement for all students (Dobbins, Gagnon, & Ulrich, 2014; Sperry, Neitzel & Engelhardt-Wells, 2010; Utley, Mortweet, & Greenwood, 1997; Wexler, Reed, Pyle, Mitchell & Barton, 2015), even students with EBD (Dunn, Shelnut, Ryan & Katsiyannis, 2017; Ryan, Reid, & Epstein, 2004). Given that poor social relationships with peers

is one of the identifiable and definable characteristics of students with EBD, it is recognized that social interaction with peers about text might be difficult to facilitate, specifically in self-contained settings. However, this interaction could also serve as practice for students to learn socially acceptable ways of communicating; the activity could potentially influence both academic and behavioral outcomes.

Opportunities created for students to experience progress and competence in reading
Creating opportunities to experience progress and competence in reading was evident in only Case 2, and it was minimal. Evidence of this practice consisted of only one activity on one specific day in which the teacher was "benchmarking" students. However, the "benchmarking" activity ended up being a negative experience for one of the three children with whom the teacher worked. The experience was negative for this student because she was punished by the teacher for refusing to answer a comprehension question, which asked about the chores she engaged in at her home. The teacher was unable to see the possibility that the student may have refused to answer the question because she did not do chores at home. Instead, the lack of answer given by the student was seen as defiant and her attitude was seen as disrespectful. The student was asked to spend some time in the time out chair.

With this said, often teachers conduct progress-monitoring sessions and communicate goals on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis. Given that the researcher only conducted five consecutive observations, it is possible that there were not enough observations to fully evidence this practice. However, creating opportunities to experience progress and competence also includes informal daily feedback related to reading tasks and activities (Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Martin-Chang, 2017). Across all three cases, there was no evidence that teachers provided reading related feedback on a daily basis that would help students monitor their own progress.

Presence of a literacy-rich environment in which students are invited to engage in the rich literacy environment
The Classroom Literacy Environmental Profile (CLEP) yield two subscale scores. Across all three cases, the scores on the first subscale titled, *Provisioning the Classroom with Literacy Tools*, fell within the "minimal" range. A score within the minimal range indicates that there were several different types of literacy tools present, but not at the acceptable levels or abundantly supplied. In addition, a score of minimal on subscale one indicates that there were literacy tools to support the number of students in the classroom, but they may not have been in good working order, lacked complexity, or were developmentally inappropriate.

Across all three cases, the scores on the second subscale title, *Arranging Classroom Space and Literacy Tools, Gaining Students' Interest in Literacy Events, and Sustaining Students' Interactions with Literacy Tools*, fell within the "impoverished" range. A score of "impoverished" indicates that classroom environment provided "little support for literacy acquisition, that there was a bleak or stark quality in the classroom atmosphere due to random placement of only a few literacy tools, and that literacy was not identified as a valued goal" (Wolfersberger et al., 2004, p.271).

Conclusions and Implications

Collectively, findings suggest that, across all three cases, relatively poor environments existed for fostering reading motivation such that little evidence was found in which teachers were implementing practices that are known to foster motivation to read. Thus, these findings have several implications for the field and warrant recommendations for further study. First and most importantly, these findings highlight the need for an increased focus on the education and treatment of children and youth being served in self-contained classroom settings for students with EBD. More specifically, the poor environments found for fostering motivation to read coupled with the rigid behavior management practices evidenced through the researchers' reflective notes, suggest that it is likely that little has changed in self-contained settings for this population of students since Jane Knitzer's classic study in 1990. For example, Knitzer and her colleagues found the dominant EBD curriculum to be about controlling the behaviors of children (Knitzer et. al, 1990). They coined the phrase "curriculum of control" to describe the learning environment in self-contained EBD classroom setting, which is the merging of curriculum and behavior management. They also found that that teaching strategies used by teachers in self-contained classroom settings were limited and often ineffective and that teachers failed to adapt the curriculum to the individual differences, styles, and needs of students. Broadly, in terms of the academic learning environment, Knitzer and her colleagues (1990) found a "general lack of educational vitality and imagination."

Broadly, further research, conducted specifically in self-contained settings, is needed. The unique challenges and barriers to implementing research-based practices in these settings needs to be fully understood. In addition, research is needed to compare learning environments in general education classrooms to those of self-contained classrooms for students with EBD. This comparison will allow for a more nuanced understanding of why such poor environments existed in these classrooms.

In general, more research is needed to gain a comprehensive and in- depth understanding about what teachers working in self-contained settings know about research-based practices for academic and behavioral learning specific to this type of classroom. It would also be beneficial for researchers to conduct an in-depth qualitative exploration into how these teachers acquired their beliefs. Findings from studies such as these would help researchers and teacher educators create more focused courses, programs, and professional development opportunities.

To further support the need for training in these settings, the behavioral needs of the children and youth being served in these classrooms are more intense and the demands asked of these teachers are numerous and often complex, such that some experts in the field have expressed concern that too much is expected of these teachers (Zabel, Kaff, & Teagarden, 2011), yielding poor working conditions (Bettini, et al., 2016; Bettini, et al., 2015). Some suggest that the intensity and services these teachers are expected to provide requires a unique or enhanced set of skills to be successful (Prather-Jones, 2011). Thus, this is likely contributing to the high attrition rate of teachers working in these classrooms (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteve, Olorunda, 2009; Billingsley, 2005). These factors, in combination with the findings from this study allow for one to theorize that with better trained teachers who are well supported by professionals with an understanding of how to work in these classrooms, student progress is more likely to happen. Thus, future research should focus on the knowledge and skills needed to teach in these classrooms so that a

specially designed curriculum can be created to train and support these teachers before and after they enter the field.

There are several limitations that should be considered within the current study. First, being that this study is a multiple case study, by design, results only included data from three classrooms and should be interpreted with caution. However, the reader should keep in mind that the intent of this study was to explore and describe, and to develop further questions to be answered through more rigorous research; the intent was not to describe generalizable findings.

The study results potentially could have been improved if multiple researchers had been involved during observation. This would have allowed for multiple perspectives in addressing the same question and could have provided a checks-and-balances system for reliability and validity of study findings (McMilliam & Schumacher, 2006). More specifically, multiple researchers during the collection of observational data could have allowed the researcher to conduct inter-rater reliability analyses, thereby increasing the reliability of these findings. However, it must be noted that it is also likely that the presence of multiple researchers in these classrooms would have created an undesirable distraction. Although limitations related to reliability exist, the experience of the researcher can add a level of credibility to study findings, which should not be ignored. For example, Shenton (2004) highlighted several recommended provisions to improve confidence that researchers have accurately recorded the phenomenon under scrutiny. One of these is to consider the "background, qualifications, and experience of the investigator". Alkin, Daillak and White (1979) went as far to suggest that, in qualitative research, a scrutinizer's trust in the researcher is of equal importance to the adequacy of the procedures themselves. Thus, although the limitation of reliability exists in this study, the researcher's experience working as a teacher for nine years in a self-contained setting for students with EBD must be taken into consideration when considering the credibility of the study findings. In addition, it is likely that the researcher would not have obtained permission to conduct the study with a second observer in the classroom as this would have been an increased distraction for the teacher and the students.

Lastly, results of this study could have been improved if comparison was made to general education classroom settings within the same school or even school district. Without this comparison, caution must be made, as it is difficult to determine if the need is only in self-contained settings or if the issue is more systemic in nature and broad professional development is needed. However, it is important to note that the study design did indeed allow for the researcher to generate hypotheses and ideas for further inquiry, which was the broad goal of this study.

Overall, this study serves as a call to researchers**,** teacher educators, and all education professionals highlighting the need to focus attention on the education and treatment of young people being served specifically in self-contained settings. Historically, students with EBD have not performed well in school (Bradley, Doolittle, & Bartolotta, 2008). There are several factors, both internal and external to schools that likely play a role in the success of students with EBD, but regardless, attention must be paid to the education and treatment of these young people while they are at school. In addition, although inclusion is ideal, self-contained classrooms are clearly not going away. Thus, self-contained classrooms must be a place where students can go to get

the support they need and a place families and students can find hope. Without hope, these students have mostly experiences of failure and lack of success. Understanding both the contributors to the poor outcomes that continue to exist and strategies for addressing these outcomes should become a primary focus for researchers. Lastly, it is equally important for teacher educators to increase focus on training and education of future and present teachers working specifically in self-contained settings and alternative settings for students with EBD. Teaching in a self-contained classroom, specifically for students with EBD is not easy. Teachers need to be well prepared to deal with the multiple demands required of them while working in this setting. This preparation can be achieved through quality, focused training programs, professional development opportunities, and mentoring opportunities. In sum, there is a considerable amount of work to be done to improve the education and treatment of young people with EBD who are being educated in self-contained settings.

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