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Working Conditions in Self-Contained Settings for Students With Emotional Disturbance

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Abstract

Students with emotional disturbance (ED) depend upon special education teachers (SETs) to use evidence-based practices (EBPs) to promote their well-being. SETs, in turn, depend upon school leaders to provide working conditions that support learning and implementation of academic and social EBPs. We conducted an integrative narrative review of research examining working conditions SETs experience serving students with ED in self-contained schools and classes, to better understand whether SETs in these settings experience conditions necessary to effectively implement academic and social EBPs. Our findings suggest that conditions necessary for learning and implementing EBPs are seldom present in these settings. In addition, the extant research on SETs' working conditions in these settings is largely disconnected from research investigating teachers' use of EBPs.

Keywords

working conditions, emotional and behavioral disorders, special education teacher quality, evidence-based practices, self-contained settings

Nationally, 38.1% of students classified with emotional disturbance (ED) aged six through 21 receive instruction outside of general education for more than 40% of the day (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, & Office of Special Education Programs, 2014); many of these students are educated in self-contained schools and classes. These specialized settings are part of the continuum of least restrictive environments, a setting in which students with significant behavioral needs can benefit from the most intensive, individually tailored academic and social evidence-based practices (EBPs; Bullock & Gable, 2006). EBPs are practices and programs that have been rigorously tested and shown to improve student outcomes; their implementation is especially crucial for supporting growth among students with substantial learning and behavioral needs (Cook & Odom, 2013).

EBPs for both academic instruction and social interventions are essential for students with ED who, as a group, have problematic school and life outcomes, including high rates of dropping out, academic underachievement, unemployment, and incarceration (Bradley, Doolittle, & Bartolotta, 2008). For instance, students with ED have academic skills in the bottom quartile in reading, math, and written expression (Lane, Barton-Arwood, Nelson, & Wehby, 2008)—deficits that persist over time (Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004). Therefore, it is essential that students with ED participate in academic and social interventions that use EBPs to alter these trajectories.

Yet, observational studies indicate that special education teachers (SETs) serving students with ED use EBPs infrequently, even in self-contained schools and classes specifically designed to provide students the greatest access to evidence-based interventions (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2009; Maggin, Wehby, Moore Partin, Robertson, & Oliver, 2011; Scott, Alter, & Hirn, 2011). For instance, Levy and Vaughn (2002) observed the reading instruction six SETs provided students with ED in self-contained elementary classes. Participants were experienced SETs whose principals judged them highly effective. Yet, most of them made limited use of both academic and social EBPs; three were observed using negative comments during 70% of interactions with students

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(Levy & Vaughn, 2002). Inconsistent use of EBP in self-contained settings is a serious disservice to students who rely on SETs for the majority of their education.

Working Conditions and Use of EBPs

In a commentary on the state of the research on emotional and behavioral disabilities, Walker (2014) expressed concern that our field knows relatively little about why EBPs are so seldom adopted. He called for more intensive, systematic investigation of contextual factors that contribute to implementation of EBPs. Scholars of implementation science have found that practitioners' abilities to implement and sustain EBPs depend upon organizational factors, including working conditions (Fixsen, Blase, Horner, & Sugai, 2009; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). In addition, a compelling body of research demonstrates that working conditions are related to the quality and effectiveness of teachers' practices (Bettini, Crockett, Brownell, & Merrill, 2016; Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Kraft & Papay, 2014). For instance, Johnson and colleagues found that teachers in schools with stronger working conditions were more effective at promoting students' achievement gains.

There are several possible pathways by which working conditions may influence SETs' use of EBPs. First, SETs working in more positive conditions are less likely to experience burnout (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014); this is important because researchers have identified significant negative relationships between SETs' burnout and (a) their adherence to interventions and (b) their students' attainment of goals from their individualized education plans (Ruble & McGrew, 2013). Second, SETs working in more positive conditions are more likely to intend to continue teaching (Jones, Youngs, & Frank, 2013). Losing SETs to poor working conditions is concerning because SETs become more effective with experience; when teachers leave, their knowledge and skill in implementing EBPs leave with them, resulting in significant academic costs for students (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Third, working conditions may provide conditions SETs need to continue learning EBPs. For instance, curricular materials can shape what teachers learn about instructional content (e.g., Grossman & Thompson, 2004), whereas interactions with knowledgeable colleagues can facilitate teachers' learning (e.g., Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009; Kraft & Papay, 2014). Fourth, working conditions may also directly influence teachers' practices by providing them time and materials necessary to enact EBPs (Bettini, Kimerling, Park, & Murphy, 2015).

Prior studies have demonstrated that SETs serving in self-contained settings experience working conditions in substantially different ways than SETs teaching in other service delivery models (Embich, 2001; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Even within a given service delivery model (e.g., self-contained classes), SETs working with students with ED have substantially different experiences than SETs serving other populations of students; for instance, Nichols and Sosnowsky (2002) found SETs in self-contained classes were more likely to experience the depersonalization component of burnout when they served more students with ED. These studies indicate it is important to examine what conditions SETs in self-contained settings for students with ED experience separately from conditions other SETs encounter.

Thus, this integrative narrative literature review examines SETs' working conditions in self-contained settings for students with ED. We first briefly describe what SETs must do to implement EBPs. We then summarize a conceptual framework, developed by Bettini and colleagues (2016), describing working conditions likely to foster SETs' learning and implementation of EBPs. Finally, we conduct a systematic search and integrative narrative review of research examining whether the conditions SETs experience in self-contained settings for students with ED align with the conditions likely to promote their use of EBPs.

What Does Implementation of an EBP Require SETs to Know and Do?

Torres, Farley, and Cook (2012) outline the actions in which SETs should engage when selecting and executing an EBP. These actions include (a) determining relevant student, environmental, and instructor characteristics; (b) searching for relevant EBPs; (c) selecting an EBP that is appropriately matched to the students' needs, the situation, and the teacher's skills; (d) identifying the essential elements of the EBP; (e) implementing the EBP; (f) monitoring the fidelity of implementation; (g) monitoring students' progress; (h) adapting the practice as necessary; (i) making decisions based on current data; and (j) advocating for the practice within the school (Torres et al., 2012). Each of these steps will likely require SETs to have substantial knowledge about the EBP, students' needs, and effective pedagogy in general. For instance, to correctly identify essential components of an EBP and effectively adapt them, SETs must have the capacity to critically examine the practice, the key components that result in improved outcomes, and how the EBP can be adapted for an individual student without interfering with those key components—not an easy or a simple task. Furthermore, as Torres and colleagues note, SETs must situate the practice within academic instruction that is generally effective.

What Working Conditions Support SETs in Implementing EBP?

Bettini and colleagues (2016) conducted a systematic review of all studies investigating relationships between SETs' working conditions and either their instructional

quality or students' academic achievement. Based on this review, they developed a conceptual framework describing working conditions influencing SETs' instruction. The literature they synthesized was limited, but they identified seven working conditions likely to promote SETs' instructional quality and students' outcomes. First, SETs need opportunities to learn EBPs; learning opportunities are likely more effective when they focus on content, are actively engaging, are of substantial duration, and involve collaboration with colleagues (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Second, SETs need sufficient planning time to allow them to organize materials, evaluate data, and adapt practices to meet students' needs (Allinder, 1996). Third, SETs need instructional groups appropriate for the EBP they are trying to implement (Russ, Chiang, Rylance, & Bongers, 2001); SETs may be better able to use practices that meet individual students' needs when serving relatively small groups of students with similar instructional needs (Russ et al., 2001; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007). Fourth, SETs need time to implement EBPs in instruction (Brownell et al., 2013). Fifth, SETs also likely need instructional materials to implement the EBP (Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, & Galman, 2010; Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, & Arguelles, 2003). Sixth, for SETs to continue using an EBP over time, support from colleagues and administrators may be essential (Bishop et al., 2010; Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, & Arguelles, 2003). Finally, SETs might be more effective at implementing EBPs when they work in healthy school cultures, where all staff share a sense of responsibility for students with disabilities (McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014).

We were interested in examining working conditions SETs experience serving students with ED in self-contained schools and classes. We addressed two research questions:

> **Research Question 1:** What working conditions do SETs experience in self-contained settings for students with ED?
> **Research Question 2:** Are these conditions aligned with those likely to promote use of EBPs?

Method

Using an integrative, narrative literature review, we examined the extent to which working conditions in self-contained classes for students with ED align with those likely to promote use of EBPs. For the purposes of this investigation, the term *working conditions* included a teacher's subjective perceptions of his or her working conditions as well as objective conditions in the school and classroom (cf. Bettini et al., 2016). Our review was conducted on published research that met specific criteria and it was completed using a multiple-gated procedure.

Inclusion Criteria

To be included, studies first needed to examine SETs' working conditions, as defined previously. Studies that operationalized working conditions in terms of students' socio-economic status (e.g., Wiley, Siperstein, Forness, & Brigham, 2010) were excluded, as were studies of classroom conditions created by teachers, such as instructional practices (e.g., Scott et al., 2011).

Second, at least 50% of participants needed to be SETs serving students with ED in self-contained schools or classes (i.e., public or private non-boarding schools), or results for these participants needed to be disaggregated. Studies of SETs serving students with ED in residential schools, wilderness schools, and juvenile detention were excluded, as the uniqueness of those schooling environments likely affects teacher working conditions and merits separate study.

Third, we initially limited the search to peer-reviewed studies published after 2001 (i.e., No Child Left Behind). However, only four studies after 2001 met criteria, so we expanded to include peer-reviewed studies published since 1990; because there are likely many changes in SETs' working conditions since 1990, we attended closely to changes in findings over time.

Procedure

Our literature search was completed in several phases. It included an electronic search, a hand search, an ancestral search, and a search of professional contacts for articles that met our inclusion criteria.

Electronic search. We conducted a systematic search of databases on March 31, 2014: Academic Search Complete, Business Source Premier, Education Full Text, ERIC, PsycINFO, and the Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection. Search terms included all possible combinations of the terms: (a) *working conditions* (and related terms: *school culture*, *school climate*, *classroom conditions*, *school context*, *school environment*, *work context*, or *classroom environment*), (b) *emotional/behavioral disorder* (and related terms: *EBD*, *behavior* disord**, *emotion* disturb**, or *social emotion**), and (c) *teacher* (and related terms: *self-contain** or *alternative school*). Four hundred seventy-five articles were identified. A second systematic search was conducted on October 31, 2015, to update the first, yielding 80 articles (127 before duplicates were removed). The same databases and search terms were used, but dates were limited to 2014 to 2015.

First electronic search coding. The first and second authors independently read titles and abstracts of articles populated by the electronic search of ERIC, and the third and fourth authors read the titles and abstracts of the 338

articles from remaining databases. Teams retained articles coded as possibly meeting inclusion criteria for further analysis. In addition, if raters disagreed or the abstract did not provide sufficient information, the article was retained. Through this process, we identified 37 articles for possible inclusion. Inter-rater reliability was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements and multiplying by 100. The teams averaged 97% agreement in the title and abstract review. We distributed the 37 articles from the first pass between two coding teams (the first and third authors constituted one team, the second and fourth authors the other) for the second pass. The coding teams read the articles in their entirety to determine whether they met inclusion criteria. Inter-rater agreement was 100%. Six articles that met the inclusion criteria were identified.

Second electronic search coding. The first and fourth authors conducted a title and abstract review of the 80 articles identified in the second search. They identified seven articles as potentially meeting inclusion criteria and had 95% coding agreement. We distributed the seven articles into teams (first and third author constituted one team; the second and fourth author constituted the other) for the full article review. One additional article (Bettini et al., 2015) was identified as meeting inclusion criteria. Coding agreement on the full article review was 100%.

Hand search. We then conducted a hand search of the two journals (*Behavior Disorders* and *Remedial and Special Education*) in which two or more of the seven identified articles were published from 1990 to 2015. One additional article (Pullis, 1992) was identified for inclusion.

Ancestral search. Next, we conducted an ancestral review of the reference lists of the eight identified articles. One additional article (Billingsley & Cross, 1994) was identified.

Professional contacts. Finally, the first author contacted authors of any identified study published in the last 5 years. We discussed this search at professional conferences and in conversations with scholars. Professional contacts provided one additional study that had not been identified through other search procedures (Hoge & Rubenstein-Avila, 2014).

Results

Table 1 is a summary of the method, strengths, and limitations of the studies we reviewed. Overall, the majority of studies ($n = 8$) relied on surveys with relatively large samples (Albrecht, Johns, Mounstevens, & Olorunda, 2009; Billingsley & Cross, 1994; George & George, 1995; Henderson, Klein, Gonzalez, & Bradley, 2005; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001; Pullis, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Only one study used qualitative methods (Hoge & Rubenstein-Avila, 2014), and one used teacher log data in combination with quantifiable data from interviews (Bettini et al., 2015).

In the following sections, we describe results of these studies. We first discuss working conditions SETs experienced in self-contained settings for students with ED. We then examine to what extent reported working conditions align with those likely to promote SETs' use of EBPs.

Working Conditions in Self-Contained Settings for Students With ED

We use Bettini and colleagues' (2016) conceptual framework as a framework for examining working conditions SETs experience in self-contained settings for students with ED. We discuss findings with respect to each element of the conceptual framework—professional learning experiences, planning time, instructional grouping, instructional time, instructional resources, instructional interactions with colleagues and administrators, and school culture.

Professional learning experiences. Albrecht and colleagues (2009) surveyed 776 SETs and related service providers who served students with ED; 18% of SETs rated their professional development very poor or poor, 27.7% rated it satisfactory, and 54.3% rated it good or excellent. Teachers' ratings of professional development were significantly associated with their intentions to continue teaching (Cohen's $d = .29$).

Hoge and Rubenstein-Avila's (2014) qualitative case study of an alternative school for students with ED found different results. They interviewed six staff from the school; SETs reported having inadequate professional development, even with respect to widely used practices. For instance, participants reported all staff used a level system to monitor students' behaviors; yet, one participant shared, "believe it or not, we are not trained on that" (p. 310).

Conclusions about professional learning experiences. Drawing conclusions about professional learning experiences from these two studies is difficult, given their very different methods and results. Nevertheless, we can tentatively conclude that many SETs in self-contained settings may not feel that they have adequate access to the kind of high-quality professional development that is likely necessary for them to learn about and implement EBPs. However, both studies only described SETs' perceptions of their professional development, without examining the nature of those professional learning experiences; thus, it is not clear whether their professional development was characterized by features likely to promote positive changes in their practice (e.g., sustained duration, collaborative; Hochberg & Desimone, 2011).

Table 1. Methods of Included Studies.

Citation	Method	Strengths	Limitations
McManus and Kauffman (1991)	Sample: 402 members of CCBD (257 of whom served students with ED) Data: Survey Analyses: Descriptive statistics, step-wise multiple regression	• Large sample • Participants randomly selected within CCBD members • Survey field tested with members of target population • 66% response rate	• CCBD members unlikely to be representative • No psychometric data to support items' or scales' validity • No reporting of regression equations or sequence in which variables were added to equations
Pullis (1992)	Sample: 224 special educators Data: Survey Analyses: Exploratory factor analysis, MANOVA	• Large sample • Strong validity data for instruments	• Data collected over 5 years • Response rate not reported • Sampling strategy not systematic • MANOVA conducted with restricted range (most vs. least stressed)
Billingsley and Cross (1994)	Sample: 658 special educators (159 of whom served students with ED) from Virginia Data: Survey Analyses: Path analysis	• Large, random sample • 82% response rate • Strong reliability (Cronbach's α) for all scales	• Sample not generalizable outside of Virginia • Linear composites used for scales • Other scale validity data (i.e., evidence of dimensionality) not reported
George and George (1995)	Sample: 96 special educators from 23 states Data: Survey with follow-up interviews Analyses: Descriptive statistics, chi-square, independent samples *t* tests	• Randomly sampled districts • 81% response rate for survey • 66% response rate for interviews	• Separate tests of significance may have identified relationships that would not have been significant had all constructs been tested simultaneously in one regression equation
Singh and Billingsley (1996)	Sample: 658 special educators (159 of whom served students with ED) from Virginia Data: Survey Analyses: Path analysis	• Large, random sample • 82% response rate • Strong reliability (Cronbach's α) for all scales	• Sample not generalizable outside of Virginia • Linear composites used for scales • Other scale validity data (i.e., evidence of dimensionality) not reported • Same data and methods as Billingsley and Cross (1994), only slight differences in the specified models
Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, and Ohlund (2001)	Sample: 415 members of CCBD Data: Survey Analyses: Multiple regression	• Large, random sample • Strong reliability (Cronbach's α) for all scales • 83% response rate • Compared non-responders with responders and found no significant differences	• Convenience sample of CCBD members unlikely to be representative • Linear composites used for scales • Other scale validity data (i.e., evidence of dimensionality) not reported
Henderson, Klein, Gonzalez, and Bradley (2005)	Sample: 4,546 special educators (of whom 859 served students with ED) Data: Survey Analyses: *t* tests, chi-square, ANOVA	• Large, nationally representative sample • Instrument pilot tested	• 32% response rate • Limited information about pilot testing or validity of instrumentation
Albrecht, Johns, Mounstevens, and Olorunda (2009)	Sample: 776 special educators and related service providers Data: Survey Analyses: Chi-square, ANOVA	• Large sample • Expert review panel addressed content validity of the instrument	• Convenience sample of CCBD members and attendees at CEC unlikely to be representative • Response rate not reported
Hoge and Rubenstein-Avila (2014)	Sample: Six staff from an exclusionary school for students with ED Data collection: Semi-structured interviews Analyses: Case study	• Extensive interviews provided rich qualitative data • Iterative data collection • Member checking and peer debriefing used to enhance trustworthiness and credibility	• Generalizability not possible with a qualitative study of one school
Bettini, Kimerling, Park, and Murphy (2015)	Sample: Convenience sample of eight special educators Data: Experience sampling logs of special educators' time use, semi-structured interviews Analyses: Descriptive statistics, correlation	• Qualitative data supplemented and explained quantitative data • Strong content validity evidence for logs	• Small convenience sample • Experience sampling log reliability data not reported • Correlation tested without controlling for other relevant factors

Note. ED = emotional disturbance; CCBD = Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders.

Planning time. Two studies provided information about the amount of planning time SETs were allocated (Bettini et al., 2015; McManus & Kauffman, 1991); four studies indicated what work SETs had to do during planning time (Albrecht et al., 2009; Bettini et al., 2015; Hoge & Rubenstein-Avila, 2014; McManus & Kauffman, 1991); and three studies

examined potential consequences of inadequate planning time (Albrecht et al., 2009; Bettini et al., 2015; George & George, 1995). McManus and Kauffman surveyed a random sample of SETs who were members of CCBD, 257 of whom served students with ED in self-contained settings. They found 45% had less than 30 min of preparation time, whereas 37% had between 30 min and an hour, and 18% had more than an hour (McManus & Kauffman, 1991).

In Bettini and colleagues' (2015) study, eight SETs in self-contained settings for students with ED completed logs of their time use once per half hour for 5 days. Log data indicated SETs were spending almost 14% of instructional time engaged in planning. In interviews, four of the eight SETs reported having no scheduled planning time, and one SET who did have scheduled plan time reported that she regularly supervised students during that time.

Four studies provided insights into SETs' planning responsibilities. McManus and Kauffman (1991) found SETs were expected to plan a mean of 20.46 different lessons for 18.70 different instructional groups across multiple subjects. Similarly, the SETs in Bettini and colleagues' (2015) study reported they were responsible for planning lessons for up to six subjects to as many as five grade levels. Hoge and Rubenstein-Avila (2014) also reported SETs were responsible for planning instruction in all content areas to multiple grade levels. In addition, SETs must also use planning time for special education paperwork, a responsibility 55.9% of SETs in Albrecht and colleagues' (2009) survey reported having poor or very poor time to fulfill; a smaller portion (20.9%) reported having good or excellent time for paperwork.

Three studies examined possible effects of inadequate planning time. Albrecht and colleagues (2009) found SETs who felt time for paperwork was inadequate were more likely to plan to leave than SETs who felt time was adequate (Cohen's $d = .36$). George and George (1995) obtained similar results; SETs who felt they had inadequate time for paperwork and for developing curricula were more likely to report planning to leave. Finally, SETs in Bettini and colleagues' (2015) study reported that, because of limited planning time, they structured some lessons such that other adults (e.g., paraprofessionals) could supervise instruction while they planned. Thus, students were losing valuable instructional time with SETs while SETs planned.

Conclusions about planning time. The reviewed studies fairly consistently indicated SETs felt they had insufficient time to plan for teaching multiple subjects to students from multiple grade levels, and to also complete paperwork (Albrecht et al., 2009; Bettini et al., 2015; George & George, 1995; Hoge & Rubenstein-Avila, 2015; McManus & Kauffman, 1991). However, only two studies examined the amount of time SETs had to plan, and one of these studies is quite old (McManus & Kauffman, 1991), whereas the other relied on a small convenience sample (Bettini et al., 2015). Furthermore, no studies examined other features of planning time, such as whether SETs have access to collaborators and support personnel during planning time.

Instructional grouping. Four studies provided insights into the nature of the instructional groups SETs were assigned. Among the 257 CCBD members McManus and Kauffman (1991) surveyed, the average caseload size was 11.53 students, with an average of 10.48 of those students receiving instruction primarily in self-contained classes. Among SETs George and George (1995) surveyed, the average class size was 10.10 students per self-contained class within a general education school, and 10 students per class in self-contained schools.

More recently, Henderson and colleagues (2005) found that SETs serving students with ED taught groups that were significantly more homogeneous, in terms of students' eligibility category, than other SETs; 38.2% of SETs serving students with ED reported only serving students whose primary disability was ED, compared with 23.1% of other SETs whose students all had the same disability classification. Yet, Bettini and colleagues' (2015) investigation suggests that SETs serving students with ED may have instructional groups that are quite heterogeneous in terms of students' grade levels; the eight SETs in their study reported being responsible for teaching students from up to five grades in the same instructional group.

Conclusions about instructional grouping. Two studies conducted in the 1990s concurred in finding that SETs served groups of about 10 students with ED in self-contained settings (George & George, 1995; McManus & Kauffman, 1991), but no recent studies indicate whether this has changed in the intervening years. It is possible the number of students per classroom may have changed, as a result of increasing inclusion, changes in methods by which students are qualified for service in these settings (e.g., responsiveness to intervention), changes in state limits on class sizes, or changes in school funding. No recent studies have examined the sizes or educational needs of the instructional groups SETs are assigned in these settings.

Instructional time. SETs serving in the self-contained school Hoge and Rubenstein-Avila (2014) studied felt time for academic instruction was inadequate. Participants in Bettini and colleagues' (2015) study reported providing instruction during 32.36% of sampled intervals. The proportion of time spent on instruction was significantly negatively correlated with the number of extra responsibilities SETs were assigned ($R^2 = .35$); extra responsibilities included tasks unrelated to students' academic and behavioral needs, such as bus duty, supervising other teachers' students in time-out, managing bus schedules for all students with disabilities in the school,

providing daily training for all paraprofessionals in the school, and preparing students' breakfasts. Finally, McManus and Kauffman (1991) found a significant relationship between SETs' perceptions of the frequency of interruptions to instruction and their willingness to accept more students on their caseloads, indicating SETs whose time was more frequently interrupted were less willing to take on new responsibilities (McManus & Kauffman, 1991).

Conclusions about instructional time. No solid conclusions about SETs' time for instruction can be drawn across such disparate studies. However, these studies suggest SETs' perceptions of instructional time and their decisions about how to use instructional time may be related to other factors, such as the frequency of interruptions to their instruction (McManus & Kauffman, 1991) and the number of extra responsibilities they are assigned (Bettini et al., 2015).

Instructional resources. Albrecht and colleagues (2009) found more than half of SETs reported access to curriculum as very poor/poor or satisfactory (24.9% and 27.1%, respectively), whereas 48.1% reported good/excellent access to curriculum. Slightly less than half reported access to technology as very poor/poor or satisfactory (24.7% and 23.9%, respectively), and 51.5% reported good/excellent access to technology. SETs who intended to leave their position within 2 years rated access to curriculum and instructional resources (Cohen's d = .38) and access to technology (Cohen's d = .36) significantly lower than those who intended to stay.

Conclusion. Albrecht and colleagues' (2009) study indicates access to instructional resources may be problematic. However, no conclusions can be drawn from one study.

Instructionally focused interactions with colleagues and administrators. No reviewed studies specifically investigated SETs' access to instructionally focused interactions with colleagues and administrators. However, eight studies did examine SETs' access to social support, a broader construct that could plausibly encompass instructional interactions with colleagues and administrators. These studies investigated (a) SETs' perceptions of the amount and accessibility of social support, (b) SETs' perceptions of what kind of social support is most useful, (c) SETs' perceptions of support in their district, (d) the relationship between social support and stress, (e) the relationship between social support and job satisfaction, and (f) the relationship between social support and intentions to continue teaching.

SETs' perceptions of amount and accessibility of social support. Three studies reported SETs' perceptions of the amount or accessibility of support. Among 257 CCBD members surveyed by McManus and Kauffman (1991), 85% reported having assistance from a paraprofessional, though the proportion of time paraprofessionals were available varied greatly within their sample. A plurality of SETs also sought help from the principal one to four times/week (42%), from other SETs one to two times/week (30.4%), from a special education supervisor monthly (46.2%), from a school psychologist monthly (40.4%), from related service personnel monthly (44.1%), from general educators never (37.6%), and from a mental health specialist never (50%).

Nelson and colleagues (2001) surveyed a random sample of 415 SETs who were members of CCBD. Surveys asked participants about perceptions of their competence working with students with behavioral challenges, demographic backgrounds, relationships with principals, involvement in school decision making, relationships with colleagues, and stress. The mean rating of support from principals was moderately high (M = 2.80 of 4, SD = 0.61), as were the mean ratings for capacity to contribute to decisions (M = 3.23 of 4, SD = 0.51) and working relationships with colleagues (M = 2.9 of 4, SD = 0.55).

Albrecht and colleagues (2009) asked participants about the quality of their access to support personnel. The SETs in their sample felt more supported by administrators than by other personnel. More than half (51.6%) of their participants reported having good or excellent access to administrative support, whereas 22.2% reported having satisfactory administrative support, and 26.3% reported having poor or very poor administrative support. Nearly half (46.2%) of the teachers reported having good or excellent access to support from colleagues; 29.7% indicated satisfactory access and 24.1% indicated poor or very poor access to support from colleagues. Access to support from classroom assistants was similarly high, with 46.2% reporting good or excellent access, 26.3% reporting satisfactory access, and 27.5% reporting poor or very poor access to supportive classroom assistants (Albrecht et al., 2009).

SETs' perceptions of what kind of social support is useful. Two studies examined what kinds of social support SETs found most useful. The SETs in McManus and Kauffman's (1991) study were most satisfied with the support of other SETs, especially when support was provided after a physical attack by a student. Similarly, George and George's (1995) study found that SETs rated support from other SETs and assistants as the most helpful form of support.

SETs' perceptions of support in the district. Hoge and Rubenstein-Avila (2014) examined SETs' perceptions of support from other personnel within their district. As previously described, they conducted a case study of Hinton, an alternative school for students with ED. Other schools in the district sent students with ED who demonstrated

significant behavioral challenges to Hinton for therapeutic services. The SETs at Hinton felt responsible for supporting these students in developing the skills necessary to transition back to their home schools. However, Hinton staff lacked meaningful relationships with students' home schools; furthermore, home schools did not share Hinton's belief that the goal of placement was to provide interventions so students could return to and succeed in their home school. As a result, home schools did not maintain contact with Hinton after a student was placed there, nor did they prepare for students' transitions back to the home school. The authors concluded that, without systemic relationships among staff at different schools, SETs struggled to fulfill a core responsibility—helping students transition back to neighborhood schools (Hoge & Rubenstein-Avila, 2014).

Social support and stress. Three studies investigated the relationship between social support and stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1994; Nelson et al., 2001; Pullis, 1992). Pullis surveyed 224 SETs serving students with ED in self-contained settings. Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine what factor structure represented contributions to SETs' stress. They found that the attitudes and behavior of administrators, evaluation by administrators, and the attitudes and behavior of colleagues constituted three of the top four most stressful aspects of SETs' work.

Billingsley and Cross (1994) used path analysis to examine effects of working conditions on SETs' stress, job satisfaction, and career intentions. They found SETs serving students with ED were more likely to be stressed than SETs serving students with other disabilities, and stress was significantly associated with reduced support from principals ($R^2 = .27$).

Nelson and colleagues (2001) used multiple regression to examine the proportion of variance in SETs' stress that was accounted for by their social context. They found that 15% of variance in stress was accounted for by SETs' perceptions of their relationships with principals, their working relationships with colleagues, and their ability to contribute to decision making.

Social support and job satisfaction. Two studies examined the relationship between social support and job satisfaction. Billingsley and Cross (1994) found that SETs with greater principal support were also more satisfied. Singh and Billingsley (1996) utilized the same survey data and methods as Billingsley and Cross, though there were differences in the path model tested. Their path model confirmed Billingsley and Cross's findings that principal support was strongly associated with job satisfaction.

Social support and career intentions. Three studies examined relationships between social support and SETs' intentions to continue teaching. George and George (1995) found SETs who reported less support were significantly more likely to intend to leave. Of those intending to stay, 61% reported adequate supervisory support, compared with 32% of those intending to leave. Of those intending to stay, 80% reported receiving adequate support from other SETs, compared with 50% of those intending to leave. Of those intending to stay, 84% had teacher assistants, compared with 65% of those intending to leave.

Singh and Billingsley's (1996) path analysis obtained different results. They found that the relationship between principal support and career intentions differed for SETs serving students with ED compared with other SETs. Among 159 SETs serving students with ED, principal support did not have a significant relationship with intent to stay, but it was significantly associated with career intentions for SETs serving other populations of students with disabilities.

Albrecht and colleagues' (2009) results aligned with George and George's (1995) findings; SETs with daily administrative support and daily access to support personnel were significantly more likely to intend to stay for the next 2 years. Conversely, SETs who only had support "on request" were significantly more likely to intend to leave. Ratings for administrative support (Cohen's $d = .67$), collegial support (Cohen's $d = .40$), access to consultants (Cohen's $d = .49$), availability of assistants (Cohen's $d = .27$), and availability of related service personnel (Cohen's $d = .49$) were significantly higher for those SETs intending to stay.

Conclusions about instructionally focused interactions with colleagues and administrators. No reviewed studies specifically investigated whether SETs have frequent, high-quality instructional interactions with colleagues and administrators. However, SETs generally felt satisfied with support from colleagues and administrators (Albrecht et al., 2009; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Nelson et al., 2001), especially support provided by other SETs (George & George, 1995; McManus & Kauffman, 1991). Perceptions of support were associated with stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1994; Nelson et al., 2001; Pullis, 1992), job satisfaction (Billingsley & Cross, 1994; Singh & Billingsley, 1996) and, in two of three studies, intentions to continue teaching (Albrecht et al., 2009; George & George, 1995; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

School culture. One study examined SETs' perceptions of school culture. Among SETs who Albrecht and colleagues (2009) surveyed, 45.4% rated school climate good or excellent, 32% rated it satisfactory, and 22.6% rated it poor or very poor. SETs who rated school climate more highly were significantly more likely to plan to continue teaching (Cohen's $d = .64$).

Conclusions about school culture. Albrecht and colleagues' (2009) study indicates SETs experience wide variability in

school cultures, but no conclusions can be drawn from one study.

Working Conditions' Alignment With Conditions Likely to Support EBP

None of the extant studies examined relationships between working conditions and SETs' instruction in self-contained settings for students with ED. However, the collected studies do provide insights into the degree to which SETs experience the conditions (e.g., high-quality professional development, adequate planning time, instructional interactions with skilled colleagues) that prior research suggests are necessary for SETs to learn and engage in effective practices (Bettini et al., 2016). First, SETs in most studies did not report having sufficient time for planning instruction (Albrecht et al., 2009; Bettini et al., 2015; George & George, 1995; Hoge & Rubenstein-Avila, 2015; McManus & Kauffman, 1991), or adequate instructional resources for teaching (Albrecht et al., 2009); these conditions may be poorly aligned with the conditions likely to foster SETs' use of EBPs. Most SETs reported feeling satisfied with their professional development (Albrecht et al., 2009) and their social support (Albrecht et al., 2009; George & George, 1995; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Nelson et al., 2001), but the extant studies did not provide enough information about the nature of the professional development and social support SETs received to determine whether these conditions align with the conditions likely to promote use of EBPs. Instructional grouping is the one working condition that the reviewed studies suggest may be aligned with the conditions likely to promote use of EBPs, as SETs reported teaching small groups of students who shared similar emotional and behavioral needs (George & George, 1995; Henderson et al., 2005; McManus & Kauffman, 1991).

Discussion

Prior scholarship indicates working conditions can provide essential supports for SETs' learning and enactment of EBPs (Bettini et al., 2016). Improving SETs' use of EBPs is especially important in self-contained settings for students with EBD, which have a record of providing weak instruction (e.g., Levy & Vaughn, 2002; Maggin et al., 2011). We conducted this systematic search and integrative review to better understand the nature of SETs' working conditions in self-contained settings for students with ED, and how these conditions align with the conditions SETs likely need to learn and implement EBPs. We found that extant research is limited, consisting of only 10 studies. However, some tentative conclusions are warranted.

First, the most consistent finding is that SETs who perceive their social context as more supportive generally have more positive affective responses to their work (e.g., decreased stress, increased job satisfaction, intentions to stay; Albrecht et al., 2009; Billingsley & Cross, 1994; George & George, 1995; Nelson et al., 2001; Pullis, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996), which is consistent with other research on teachers (e.g., Jones et al., 2013). There is a shortage of SETs, especially SETs serving students with ED (e.g., Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003). Retaining SETs is essential for sustainable implementation of EBPs, as SETs who leave take their knowledge and skill in using EBPs with them (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008). To sustain SETs in the field, administrative and collegial support appear to be crucial. However, the extant studies provided few insights into whether SETs in these settings experience the kind of administrative and collegial support—instructionally focused interactions—likely to promote use of EBPs.

Second, SETs serving students with ED in self-contained settings appear to have smaller instructional groups than SETs serving in other settings, and these instructional groups seem to be less heterogeneous in terms of students' disability categories (George & George, 1995; Henderson et al., 2005; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Pullis, 1992). This finding is encouraging given that prior studies have found that SETs who serve larger groups of students with more diverse needs have more difficulty providing effective instruction (Russ et al., 2001; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007). Small group instruction may be especially important to promote engagement for students with significant behavior problems (e.g., Baker, Clark, Maier, & Viger, 2008).

Third, SETs had extensive planning responsibilities, as they were assigned to teach many subjects to students from multiple grade levels (Bettini et al., 2015; Hoge & Rubenstein-Avila, 2014; McManus & Kauffman, 1991). Furthermore, SETs felt they had insufficient time in which to plan, and SETs' ratings of the adequacy of planning time were associated with their career intentions (Albrecht et al., 2009; George & George, 1995). These findings are consistent with other research showing that, when teachers feel their planning time is inadequate, they feel more overwhelmed, and teachers who feel overwhelmed are more likely to intend to leave (Westling & Whitten, 1996). None of the extant studies, however, provided insights into whether insufficient planning time was associated with instructional quality or effectiveness.

Strengths and Limitations of This Body of Research

The most significant limitation to this body of work is that only 10 studies have been conducted since 1990. The most consistent working condition examined was social support; this is a strength, as social support is the working condition from the conceptual framework with the most consistent relationships with instructional quality and effectiveness (Bettini et al., 2016).

However, a corresponding limitation is that these studies seldom provided operational definitions of social support. Social support can be used as an umbrella term encompassing a number of different constructs. Jones and colleagues (2013) illustrated the multi-dimensionality of social support in their investigation of novice SETs' socialization into their schools; they found three different forms of social support—collective responsibility, trust, and fit—had different relationships with novices' intentions to stay. Similarly, Bettini (2015) found different dimensions of social support (e.g., culture of collective responsibility, frequency of instructional interactions with colleagues, frequency of instructional interactions with mentors) had different relationships with novices' perceptions of workload manageability. As another example, Bishop and colleagues (2010) found novice SETs who received emotional or organizational support from colleagues were not as skilled at providing intensive reading instruction as novices whose colleagues provided instructional support. Thus, simply saying SETs receive social support (as did a number of studies included in this review) provides little information about the nature of social interactions SETs experienced. Closer examination of the nature of social supports SETs receive would facilitate a deeper understanding of how social relationships and interactions facilitate SETs' efforts to learn and enact effective practices for students with ED.

The extant research relied heavily on surveys. A major strength of these surveys is that they relied on common definitions of key constructs (e.g., SETs' intentions to leave teaching). However, the heavy reliance on surveys does not allow researchers to generate new theories about a construct or about relationships among constructs; this limitation is exacerbated when researchers select scales based on categories identified as relevant by prior research, as was done in many of the survey studies we reviewed. Although surveys allow researchers to understand how SETs experience and respond to working conditions, they do not allow researchers to triangulate self-report data with observations and colleagues' reports.

Finally, extant studies consistently examined affective consequences (e.g., stress, job satisfaction, intent to stay) of SETs' working conditions. Only one study examined how working conditions related to instruction (Bettini et al., 2015), and none examined how working conditions related to implementation of academic or social EBPs.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

More research is needed to better understand what working conditions SETs experience in self-contained settings, and how working conditions influence their efforts to learn and enact EBPs. We recommend that future research investigate, build upon, and refine Bettini and colleagues' (2016) conceptual framework, to (a) promote a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of SETs' working conditions in self-contained settings for students with ED and (b) determine how these working conditions relate to SETs' efforts to learn and enact EBPs.

Qualitative and observational studies are needed to supplement extant surveys, bringing greater methodological heterogeneity to this area of study. Such studies could provide insights into the ways SETs experience working conditions in these settings and mechanisms by which working conditions may influence use of EBPs. Qualitative investigations would be particularly useful as a complement to intervention research, providing insights into how working conditions may contribute to variance in SETs' implementation and maintenance of EBPs. In addition, qualitative studies of general educators' working conditions have supplemented self-report data with direct qualitative observations, obtaining richer data about teachers' working conditions and yielding findings that would not have been accessible through self-reports of working conditions (e.g., Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Grossman & Thompson, 2004).

We suggest that this area of research should extend beyond illustrating that working conditions affect SETs' affective experiences, and begin examining how working conditions influence SETs' use of EBPs. The current policy emphasis on educational outcomes means that it is essential to determine whether working conditions impact teaching quality; studies investigating this issue would support policy makers and school leaders in selectively investing in improving those working conditions most likely to impact SETs' practices. In addition, such investigations could help inform the design and dissemination of EBPs in two important ways: (a) they could illuminate the conditions likely to provide fertile ground for EBP implementation and (b) they could allow researchers to embed support for relevant working conditions into the development of EBPs. Including qualitative and quantitative measures of working conditions in intervention studies would be an efficient way of conducting this kind of research.

The studies reviewed here also have implications for EBPs intended to be used in self-contained settings for students with ED. Scholars may need to think creatively about how EBPs can be packaged in ways that facilitate and improve organizational supports for SETs in these settings. For instance, the reviewed studies indicate that SETs in these settings may have limited planning time and extensive planning responsibilities (Bettini et al., 2015; McManus & Kauffman, 1991). To address this, EBPs could be designed such that they save SETs planning time; for example, scholars could embed new practices in curricula that are specifically designed for multi-grade, multi-subject classes, thus facilitating SETs' integration of EBPs into their planning, while saving SETs time they might otherwise spend searching for or adapting instructional resources to be appropriate for multi-grade, multi-subject classes. In addition, when disseminating an intervention, we recommend that scholars work with school leaders to ensure SETs have working conditions necessary for their success. Finally, we recommend

that SETs serving in these settings advocate for themselves, to obtain the supportive working conditions necessary to fulfill their responsibilities to students.

Conclusion

Students with ED, their families, and their communities depend on SETs to use EBPs to promote positive outcomes for this vulnerable population. SETs, in turn, depend upon teacher educators, policy makers, and school leaders to ensure they experience conditions necessary to learn and enact EBPs. The studies we reviewed provide a valuable initial understanding of what working conditions SETs experience in self-contained settings for students with ED. Future research is urgently needed to further examine these working conditions and how working conditions could more effectively support SETs in implementing EBPs for students with ED.

Authors' Note

Kristen L. Merrill and Michelle M. Cumming contributed equally to this study. Since submitting this article, Nelson C. Brunsting has obtained his PhD.

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*Asterisks indicate studies included in the review.

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