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College of Education and Human Sciences

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Teacher Perceptions of Administrator Support in Special Education Classroom

Management

by

Rhonda Raglin Abramson

MA, American Intercontinental University, 2004

BS, Capital University, 1998

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2023

Abstract

The problem studied was that K-12 administrators were challenged to consistently implement leadership strategies that supported novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. The purpose of this study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. The study was guided by three key research questions regarding how K-12 administrators described their leadership strategies in supporting novice special education teachers' classroom management, how novice special education teachers described the strategies administrators used in classroom management, and what assistance from administrators novice special education teachers believed they needed to improve their classroom management skills. To answer these research questions, a basic qualitative study was carried out. Data were collected from two participant groups and analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. The results of the study contribute to positive social change by offering insight into how school administrators can better support novice special education teachers. These results may benefit both novice special education teachers who require better administrative support and administrators who wish to support teachers better; moreover, the ultimate beneficiaries of improved support of special education teachers are special needs who will receive a better education.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who without your love I would not have made it through this process.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank God for His grace, mercy, and completion of this project. I extend my sincere heartfelt love to my loving husband who put up with many years of pain and anguish to get me through. Also, to my beautiful children and grandchild that keep me looking toward a brighter sky. Last, but not least, every committee member that touched my process to the finish. There are many I missed in passing. Charge it to my head and not my heart. You are appreciated.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Special education, normally taught by teachers trained in the needs of students with disabilities, is an increasingly important issue in the United States. These students may present behavioral challenges above and beyond other students (Scott, 2017).

Therefore, learning best practices in classroom management is an essential skill for new special education teachers. The support of school administrators may be key in developing such skills given administrators often have some relevant expertise and represent the teachers' immediate superiors within the school (Rodl et al., 2018).

However, it remains unclear how administrators can best provide such support to novice special education teachers.

This chapter, Chapter 1, introduces the study. It begins with the research problem. Next is the research purpose, followed by the research questions and conceptual framework. Following the framework is a discussion of the nature of the study, then definitions of key terms, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study. Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of significance and a summary.

Background

Scott (2017) noted that many special education teachers might be poorly prepared to issue of student misbehavior, instead having focused on acquiring special education skills. Many of these novice teachers learn classroom management skills on the job (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020). The support of administrators, such as principals, is critical in their mastering these skills. Correo and Wagner (2011) noted that the role that principals play in the induction and mentoring of these teachers is challenging.

Mastering classroom management is not wholly a matter of technical skills (Poskas, 2020; Talley, 2017). Strong self-efficacy has been found to materialize into positive classroom outcomes (Poskas, 2020). Self-efficacy also aids the administrator's perception of the successful implementation of their classroom management strategies (Talley, 2017). Gaad and Khan (2007) noted, "results also indicated that teachers perceive additional training, support from administrators and access to related services and resources as necessary in order to meet the needs of their students with special educational needs in the mainstream education setting" (p. 95). However, gaining access to these beneficial types of support can be difficult. Per Walker et al. (2021), one way of cultivating support from administrators and other figures such as peers—collectively known as social resources—is through self-advocacy. However, advocating for oneself can be awkward and tenuous, especially for the novice special educators most in need of the assistance.

Administrators must exhibit traits of fairness, consistency, respect, and disciplinary action to fully succeed in their role (Kalkan et al., 2020). A lack of these provisions can lead to their efforts instead lowering self-efficacy for new teachers. Roberts et al. (2018) argued that the administrators themselves are often not fully aware of the issues in the classroom and how to address them effectively. Similarly, from the perspective of teachers, Sansosti et al. (2011) found that administrators are perceived not to be fully aware of the issues that affect the novice teachers within the teaching environment.

Taken together, these results suggest that there may be a disconnect between what administrators believe the teachers need and the support those teachers receive. Recent calls for research into the role of principal or administrator support for special education teachers (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020; Rodl et al., 2018) further supports the existence of such disconnect. It is not, based on the current literature, clear how novice special education teachers perceive administrators' efforts to be supportive. At the same time, the studies cited above suggest that administrators often have a poor grasp of what teachers want and need by way of support. Though self-advocacy can bridge this gap (Walker et al., 2021), it can be taxing and awkward for teachers. Therefore, this study was intended to ameliorate the disconnect between teachers and administrators.

Problem Statement

The problem studied here was that K-12 administrators were challenged to consistently implement leadership strategies that support novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. The failure of administrators to understand factors that influence classroom experiences of special needs students negatively affects the administrators' perceptions about classroom management. Administrative support, specifically in the cases of severe misbehavior, is a major influence on the perception of special needs teachers' classroom management. Because administrators are dealing with a high stress environment and a large workload, administrative support, or lack thereof, can impact self-efficacy, perceived success in the role, and even career decisions of special education teachers. Talley (2017) found significant links between stress and long-term teacher retention. Talley concluded that special education teachers often struggle to

perform well during their first few years of teaching. Teachers whose skills are weak in this area often are unable to implement their own lesson plans due to them being distracted by student issues.

Existing studies suggest that administrators' and teachers' perceptions of classroom management of novice teachers in special education, though often inaccurate, influence the nature of support they provide (Aktas, 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). Teachers reported the importance of the administrator being a visible and key factor for support in instruction practices. Administrative support, specifically in the cases of severe misbehavior, is a major factor regarding the perceptions of special needs teachers and a crucial support structure for novice teachers more generally (Warsame & Valles, 2018). Because administrators are dealing with a high stress environment and a large workload, the level of administrative support can impact teachers' self-efficacy, their perceived success, and even their career decisions. Further research is needed to further explore this area, including questions of how characteristics, such as administrative background, affect the support they are perceived to provide (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020). In addition, research is needed to explore the issues surrounding administrative support of special educational teachers and the many contributing factors. Another reason this topic is important is because special education teachers generally believe the lack of support adversely affects their mental health outcomes (Hester et al., 2020).

The research gap enumerated by Aramburo and Rodl (2020) and Hester et al. (2020) is also reflective of a gap in practice. The benefits of administrative support for novice teachers are well established (Saleem et al., 2020; Warsame & Valles, 2018).

However, because the specific issues relating to how administrators can best support novice special education teachers are not yet fully researched, there are no best practices in place. Indeed, without further research into specifically effective and ineffective practice, it is unfeasible to judge existing practice as being good or bad, making it difficult for administrators to appraise the quality of the support they current provide, much less enhance it.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills in the state of Ohio. Researchers have called for further research into administrators' support of special education teachers (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020; Hester et al., 2020; Rodl et al., 2018), and the case of novice special education teachers represents a subset of this larger issue.

In addition to the teacher's perspective, the administrators were allowed to offer their own perspectives regarding issues of special education classroom management. The combination of these two perspectives helped to triangulate a more accurate qualitative depiction of the underlying reality (Yin, 2017). Moreover, comparing different accounts of the same supporting efforts helped to identify mismatches in those perceptions. The results of the present study may help administrators understand how their supporting actions are interpreted and assist them in developing more effective ways of providing support for the novice special education teachers working under them.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do K-12 administrators describe their leadership strategies in supporting novice special education teachers' classroom management?

RQ2: How do novice special education teachers describe the strategies administrators use to support them in the area of classroom management?

RQ3: What assistance from administrators do novice special education teachers believe they need to improve their classroom management skills?

Conceptual Framework

This study drew on Bandura's (1969) social learning theory (SLT). SLT is a theory of the learning process that relates behavior to learning. The principal observation of SLT is that the cognitive process of learning happens within a social context (Bandura, 1969). As a result of the socially situated nature of the learning process, SLT postulates that learning can occur through observation and teaching even in the absence of any replicative effort on the part of the learner (Bandura & Hall, 2018). SLT arose out of the behaviorist learning theories initially proposed in the 1940s and developed into one of the most widely used theories of the learning process (Bandura, 1969).

Under SLT, learning is understood through four incremental levels of learning: "observation (environmental), retention (cognitive), reproduction (cognitive), and motivation" (Bandura & Hall, 2018, p. 20). In the observation stage, the learner merely observes or studies the material. This, for example, can include a student teacher observing a classroom. Retention is key to developing further; only when the content of the observational learning is retained can learning progress (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Once

the content has been learned and retained, the learner may begin to demonstrate mastery of it through reproduction. Through all these steps, motivation is the guiding thread, and likely the factor that drives observation to become retention and retention to become reproduction (Bandura & Hall, 2018).

Within the context of this study, SLT was used to create interview questions and data analysis. In particular, the interview questions were developed with an eye toward the four levels of learning described by Bandura and Hall (2018). The structure of the interview questions was developed in such a way that they probed the level of the support of administrators for novice teachers. Ideally, administrators should provide novice teachers with motivation, which is the key to learning (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Conversely, novice teachers should be learning from administrators at the cognitive levels of retention and reproduction, but it is also possible that teachers desire environmental learning—that is, for administrators to teach them strategies for classroom management through observation. A mismatch between the level at which administrators seek to teach and novice teachers wish to learn is one possible source of friction between novice teachers and administrators.

More broadly, SLT may help identify the issues that special educators face in this area. Data analysis generated themes based the work of Bandura (1969), as it applied to classroom management support. Moreover, by applying SLT to the novice special education teachers' classroom management learning process, it should be possible to identify the areas more effectively in which administrators' support could be most valuable and productive.

Nature of the Study

This research was a basic qualitative design. Qualitative researchers conduct descriptive and exploratory studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative researchers explore a phenomenon through the subjective experiences of those who have personally experienced the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In the present study, a qualitative approach was appropriate because the phenomenon under study was expressly subjective, namely the experience of support. This phenomenon could only be understood in terms of qualitative descriptors—what, why, and how—on the part of the novice special education teachers to whom it pertained. A basic qualitative research design was appropriate when the study subject was qualitative in nature, but the specific circumstances that required other research designs were not in play (Thorne, 2016). This study did not target either a specific case (as in a case study), nor the examined lived experiences of individuals in specific population groups (as in phenomenology). Hence, a basic qualitative design was most appropriate.

There was a series of questions designated for five to seven novice special education teachers and five to seven administrators about their perceptions regarding administrators' support around classroom management. The delivery method was one-on-one interviews conducted via Zoom. Open-ended questions were used so I could collect a wide array of ideas and points of view from all participants. The interviews were guided by an interview guide consisting of 15 questions that lasted roughly 60 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. I applied a qualitative thematic analysis

(Clarke & Braun, 2014) to analyze the interviews and extract key themes to make conclusions based on the research questions.

Definitions

The following definitions were used operationally within the current study:

Administrative support. Administrative support refers to actions taken by school administrators intended to benefit teachers, either through making their job easier or improving their ability to carry it out (Rodl et al., 2018).

Administrators. In this study, school administrators were operationalized as vice-principals, principals, superintendents, and any other school leaders whose authority was equal to or greater than that of a vice principal (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020).

Novice special education teachers. This present investigation defined novice special education teachers as those having 5 or fewer academic years of experience teaching special education classes.

Assumptions

Assumptions are initial certainties that researchers cannot test but must be assumed accurate to make the study meaningful (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). There were several assumptions present in this study. Firstly, it was assumed that the new special education teachers could want administrative support. Research suggests that new special education teachers can significantly benefit from administrative support (Aktas, 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). However, this does not guarantee that all such novice teachers actually desire or seek such support in practice. Secondly, it was assumed that all participants would answer the interview questions truthfully and completely. This

assumption was supported by the assurance of participant confidentiality and because there was little incentive to be untruthful. However, social desirability bias is always a concern in any study utilizing self-reported data (Bergen & Labonté, 2020).

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries on the research imposed by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The first delimitation in this study was that the scope of the study only extended to special education teachers who had been teaching for 5 years or less in Ohio. This delimitation was imposed to keep the scope of the study reasonable in terms of identifying and contacting potential participants; only a limited number of interviews were feasible. Another delimitation was that populations excluded from this study were teachers who had taught more than 5 years of and/or not teaching in special education classrooms. These populations were excluded in alignment with the research purpose, which focused on both novice teachers and special education teachers exclusively. The theoretical foundations of the study were delimited to Bandura's (1969) SLT. SLT was used because of the particular relevance of SLT to learn from peers or superiors such as novice teachers learned from administrators. Other related theories of learning that could have some relevance but were excluded to avoid theoretical oversaturation of the same concepts included Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecological systems theory and the theory of andragogy (Loeng, 2018).

Limitations

Limitations are unavoidable weaknesses of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Typically, limitations result from the methodology. One potential limitation of the

study was bias. As a researcher with a background in education, I might have been biased and took steps to minimize the effects of my preconceptions and biases. These steps included the use of careful self-reflection and the borrowing of the bracketing approach from phenomenology. The participants' own social desirability biases might have also limited the results in that, even when guaranteed confidentiality to be truthful, they could have felt the urge to present themselves in a socially acceptable light rather than a wholly truthful one. This bias was minimized through ensuring participants of the confidentiality of their responses and that no one else would know who stated what, which should help eliminate some social desirability pressure. Another limitation was that I was known to one school district in the area under study, which could have facilitated population access but could cause a greater chance of social desirability bias or otherwise complicate the data collection. I worked to avoid this issue by, where possible, ensuring I interacted with participants who did not already know me. These practices were relatively standard in terms of limiting bias in qualitative research (see Sawatsky et al., 2019).

It was also possible that the requirement to use Zoom given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic could have yielded worse data than an in-person interview. This limitation was simply my worked around. Finally, the study was limited in terms of its generalizability given the focus on one specific area, but this focus was necessitated by practical considerations. This limitation was addressed by acknowledging the appropriate scope when reporting the findings of the study.

Significance

The current study holds both academic and practical significance. In academic terms, the current study addressed a noted gap in literature. This gap was triangulated from three calls for further research. First, in their study of how administrators evaluated special educators in support and training programs, Aramburo and Rodl (2020) called for further research into how characteristics such as administrator background affect the support they are perceived to provide. This study examined that issue through a comprehensive examination of administrators' support for novice special education teachers. Second, Rodl et al. (2018) noted several key observations on the perceptions of administrators regarding their support, but also that their study did not assess these issues qualitatively, potentially losing out on significant nuance. The present study addressed that research gap by qualitatively exploring the perceptions of both administrators and teachers. Third, Hester et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of further research that can improve the effectiveness of administrator support, noting that most special education teachers they studied felt administrators do not provide effective support. The present study addressed that call for research through careful exploration of issues that could improve the interface between administrators and novice special education teachers.

Practically speaking, Hester et al.'s (2020) results also emphasize the importance of this research. The lack of effective administrative support was cited as a major factor to special education teachers' mental health struggles. Other scholars, such as Smart and Igo (2010), have emphasized the specific need for classroom management support. The present study's results may help clarify why administrators' efforts do and do not help

teachers better develop their skills, which can in turn lead to improved communication and support. An improved interface between administrators and teachers can help to create positive social change. First, it may bolster the mental health of special education teachers, benefiting them. Second, it may also improve their teaching ability, thereby providing benefits to all the students with special needs they educate and the families of those students.

Summary

In summation, the problem was that K-12 administrators were challenged to consistently implement leadership strategies to support novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. Hence, the purpose of the proposed basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions held by both novice special education teachers' and K-12 administrators regarding the administrators' support for teachers' classroom management skills. This purpose was achieved through answering three qualitative research questions: (a) How do K-12 administrators perceive they implement leadership strategies to support novice special education teachers' classroom management? (b) How do novice special education teachers perceive administrators implement leadership strategies to support novice special education teachers' classroom management? and (c) What supports do novice special education teachers believe they need to improve their classroom management skills regarding behavior? The study was conducted within the framework of SLT. Chapter 1 entailed an overview of the current study. Next, in Chapter 2, the background of the study and its theoretical foundations are further developed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills with Bandura's (1969) SLT as the framework of this study. In this chapter, I discuss my process for seeking and discovering applicable literature, the theoretical framework for this present investigation, which was Bandura's SLT, and a literature review showing the support for novice special education teachers. Chapter 2 ends with the literature synthesis and key goals of this research study.

Literature Search Strategy

In developing this review of literature, I used archives or written mentions, primary archival data, and, for the most part, journal articles. I also accessed Walden University's library to find appropriate and relevant databases given the topic of study to ensure that I built a search that was robust. To gain more control over the literature search, I also performed Thoreau multidatabase inquiries, searching each relevant database, which allowed me to find more appropriate articles and sources about the topic.

In addition, other databases were also used, such as Google Scholar, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Global Health, Ingenta Connect, JSTOR: Journal Storage, EBSCOhost Online Research Databases, and Journal Seek. I entered key search terms with the goal of obtaining relevant studies: *administrators' evaluation of special education teachers, attrition of novice special education teachers, Bandura's social learning theory (SLT), challenges of special education teachers, evaluating novice special education teachers, job demands of novice special education teachers, job*

resources of novice special education teachers, professional development for novice special education teachers, retention of novice special education teachers, social learning theory, special education teachers, the stress-related problem of special education teachers, support for novice special education teachers, and training for novice special education teachers.

In addition to the outlined and searched databases, I also searched other relevant resources including websites related to the classroom management skills of novice special education teachers and administrators who lead novice special education teachers. This literature search strategy allowed me to acquire more extensive sources related to the topic, resulting in a wider range of proper and trustworthy sources. To ensure the reliability of the searched sources, I validated that my resources had completed the peer-review process to guarantee scholarly rigor by searching for journals and articles in Ulrich's Periodical Directory (Ulrich's Web, 2019). Much of the inclusions in this literature review were from 2017 to 2021.

Conceptual Framework

Bandura's (1969) SLT was used as the framework of this study. Bandura's SLT helped guide this basic qualitative study in exploring the perceptions held by both novice special education teachers and K-12 administrators regarding the administrators' support for teachers' classroom management skills. SLT was initially based on the behaviorist learning theories initially proposed in the 1940s. Later, SLT became increasingly widespread and used as a theory of the learning process (Bandura, 1969).

The objective of Bandura's (1969) SLT is to highlight learning as a cognitive process happening within a social context. That is, Bandura's SLT is a theory that relates behavior to learning. One of the key principles of Bandura's SLT is that learning can take place through observation and teaching; learning is not constrained to merely cognitive processes (Bandura & Hall, 2018). According to SLT, learning can thus take place even in the absence of any replicative effort on the part of the learner (Bandura & Hall, 2018).

According to Bandura (1969), there are four incremental levels of learning: "observation (environmental), retention (cognitive), reproduction (cognitive), and motivation" (p. 20). During the observation stage, the learner observes, watches, and studies the material without action (Bandura & Hall, 2018). In the context of a classroom, learning in the observation stage could be a student-teacher observing a classroom (Bandura & Hall, 2018). The next incremental level of learning is retention, which is key to developing further and learning deeper. That is, learning advances only when the content of observational learning is retained (Bandura & Hall, 2018). After the learner has retained his observations and learning, the learner may begin to demonstrate mastery of it through reproduction, which is the third incremental level of learning (Bandura, 1969). The last incremental level of learning is motivation, which is present throughout all the learning processes. That is, motivation is the factor that drives the learner's observation (environmental) to retention (cognitive) to reproduction (cognitive) (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Through the outlined incremental levels of learning, SLT may help guide this study in identifying the challenges faced by special educators, especially in learning and improving their classroom management skills regarding behavior.

Researchers have used SLT in teacher preparation for student success (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021; Ismail et al., 2018; Raymond et al., 2020). For one, Raymond et al. (2020) used SLT in their study of acquiring instructional capability and proficiency among preservice educators. The researchers found that preparation practices for preservice teachers significantly improved their instructional capacity and competence to teach literacy for K-12 students (Raymond et al., 2020). Ismail et al. (2018) also used SLT in their research, examining school leaders' instructional leadership and teachers' skills. Holzberger and Prestele (2021) also referred to SLT in their study, as they examined teacher self-efficacy, cognitive commencement, and classroom administration. Their findings showed that school characteristics (including partnership, instructional direction, and involvement) were significantly impactful in teachers' levels of self-efficacy and classroom management skills (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021). Researchers have noted that SLT is a robust framework for examining teachers' learning processes and their skills while considering their environmental factors such as school characteristics (Holzberger & Prestele, 2021; Ismail et al., 2018; Raymond et al., 2020).

This study extended the application of Bandura's (1969) SLT by applying this theory in the context of novice special education teachers' classroom management learning process. The conclusions, as framed by SLT, may show specific areas in which administrators' support could be most valuable and productive to novice special education teachers' classroom management learning process.

Given the objective of this study, the use of Bandura's (1969) SLT helped address the main qualitative research questions, as well as the literature review. The data analysis

generated themes based on SLT, as it applied to classroom management support. For example, novice teachers shared their perceptions about the support they received from more experienced teachers in acquiring the knowledge and skills for effective classroom management. Moreover, I used Bandura's SLT to create the three qualitative research questions of interest.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

This part of the chapter discusses articles and journals connected to key conceptions of novice special education teachers, challenges in the special education setting, and training and professional advancement for novice special education teachers. Articles related specifically to support for special education teachers and school administrator evaluation of special education teachers are evaluated, considered, and synthesized in this section. The literature review related to key notions is then synthesized, which concludes with a gap in the literature about past research.

Special Education Teacher Attrition and Retention

Novice special education teacher attrition is a challenge in the U.S. education system. For many decades, there has been a continual teacher shortage dilemma in special education due to educator attrition (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Grant, 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Pavlidou et al., 2020). According to Grant (2017), nearly 9% of special educators do not resume special education after their first years. Billingsley and Bettini (2019) added high rates of novice special education teacher attrition result in decreasing quality of education received by students. Hester et al. (2020) concurred with this finding by Billingsley and Bettini, noting the negative impact of special education

teacher attrition on learners and school districts. Billingsley and Bettini explored this topic further through a review of the literature wherein the researchers examined and analyzed 30 studies published from 2002 to 2017. The researchers identified several factors that impacted special educator attrition and retention: lack of teacher training and experiences, negative school characteristics and working environment, and educators' demographics and nonwork considerations (Carver-Thomas & Darling, 2017; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Redding & Henry, 2019). Billingsley and Bettini and More and Rodgers (2020) also identified workload demands and the lack of administrative and collegial supports were factors that impacted special educator attrition and retention. This finding presents the problem of special education teacher attrition, as well as the factors that impact special education teacher attrition in the United States. This body of knowledge underscores the importance of further exploring the topic of special education teacher attrition, including how administrators can address the needs of novice teachers in the field of special education.

According to Hagaman and Casey (2018), preservice special education teachers, new special education teachers, and school administrators, each have different perceptions regarding the needs and challenges of novice special education teachers. Thus, with the high teacher attrition in special education, Hagaman and Casey and Göktürk et al. (2021) underscored the need for more research to detect and explain the perceived needs and support of novice special education teachers. Göktürk et al. concurred with this, as the researchers noted how it is important to identify the motivational factors that cause special education teachers to remain in the profession. For

example, collegial support for special education teachers helps them cope with work-related stress and have someone to share their challenges with (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). The ability to cope with stress enhances a teacher's motivation to stay in their position (Thomas et al., 2019). Göktürk et al. conducted a qualitative study regarding teacher retention in special education. The researchers focused on 14 special education teachers in Turkey and took a motivational perspective on examining the topic (Göktürk et al., 2021). Analyzing data using thematic analysis, the findings of their study showed that internal or motivation factors significantly impacted teachers' decision to stay or leave in the profession (Göktürk et al., 2021). The study data coincides with Aldabas (2021) and Glessner and Johnson's (2020) assertion that administrative support reducing the strain of special education teachers' workload increases the likelihood that additional support motivates the novice teacher to stay. Göktürk et al. further identified the significance of external factors in teachers' decision to stay or leave in the profession, as external forces such as working conditions supported special education teachers' decisions. The significant role of work conditions influencing a teacher to stay or leave the profession is also supported by Kebbi (2018) and Sanderson et al. (2021). The finding from Göktürk et al.'s study about the influence of work conditions has implications in deciding on how to keep special education teachers working. The study findings may be used by policymakers and educational leaders in creating programs and policies to retain qualified special education teachers in the profession.

Challenges of Novice Special Education Teachers

For administrators to identify ways to support novice special education teachers, it is essential to first understand and examine the challenges faced by novice special education teachers. Dvir and Schatz-Oppenheimer (2020) and Grant (2017) underscored the need to explore the needs and challenges that new special education teachers face. Exploring this topic further, Dvir and Schatz-Oppenheimer conducted interviews with 32 novice teachers in Israel and found several challenges commonly reported by the teachers: technological factors, pedagogical factors, and challenges within the educational system. In another study, Grant took another approach by conducting a case study on this topic. Grant examined the factors that influenced the attrition or retention of novice special education teachers. Examining the perspectives of two novice special educators, Grant identified several influences of the decisions of novice special education teachers to depart from their jobs: lack of support from the administration, too much paperwork and too many roles, and burnout. The factors related to teachers leaving their profession are also cited by Baglama et al. (2019) such as excessive paperwork include individual education plans or IEPs that are implemented and monitored by special education teachers. Further results of Grant's study revealed other factors that influenced their decisions to leave the special education field: lack of healthy co-teaching relationships, lack of co-teaching models, challenging student behavior, lack of time, excess paperwork, isolationism, and unclear special education practices and guidelines. Additionally, Tikkanen et al. (2020) found that time constraints for lesson planning and modifying assignments for special needs students are other challenges faced by special

education teachers. This research and Grant's study provide an initial outline of challenges faced by novice special education teachers in and out of the classroom. These findings may be useful for administrators who aim to find ways to support novice special education teachers in several areas of their work such as classroom management.

Work-related stressors and challenges are important to address, as this could lead to increases in teacher attrition in special education. Researchers have noted how stress and attrition are significantly correlated among special education teachers (Bennedum, 2020; Bozgeyikli, 2018; Gilmour & Wehby, 2020; Hester et al., 2020). Hester et al. (2020) examined how 366 U.S. special education teachers portray stress and attrition. Hester et al. employed a mixed-methods approach, and the respondents reported work-related stressors as the most significant factors for leaving the field of special education (Hester et al., 2020). Like Hester et al., Bennedum (2020) also examined rural elementary special education teachers and their perceptions of administrative support. The researcher used a phenomenological approach and conducted interviews with four special education teachers working in two rural school districts (Bennedum, 2020). Overall, the findings of Bennedum's study showed that special education teachers often faced significant job demands, such as excessive paperwork, data collection, and lack of time.

As such, it is common for novice special education teachers to report excessive workloads. Bettini et al. (2018) and Bettini et al. (2017) noted that the perceptions of novice special education teachers regarding their workloads and support could predict teaching outcomes. Examining this topic further, Bettini et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative investigation on this topic, examining novice special education teachers'

perceptions of workload manageability, emotional fatigue, and plans to continue working. According to Sutjiono et al. (2020), those challenges with students' behavior in special education include monitoring behavior and academic performance leading to increased stress and burnout. The findings of Bettini et al.'s (2017) pilot study showed that novice special education teachers in elementary and middle school reported more excessive workloads than general education teachers in the same levels (Bettini et al., 2017). Bruno et al. (2020) and Lovett et al. (2018) noted that the intensity of a teacher's responsibilities is a pattern among novice teachers' rate of attrition that can be addressed with added administrative support. As a result, novice special education teachers were more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, a significant component of burnout, resulting in turnover intentions (Bettini et al., 2017; Rios et al., 2020; Yulianti et al., 2018). These findings underscore the excessive workloads of novice special education teachers that lead them to experience burnout and intentions to quit (Bettini et al., 2017; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Thomas et al., 2019). Understanding the challenges of novice special education teachers is crucial to meeting their needs for support from their educational leaders (Bennedum, 2020; Bettini et al., 2017; Hester et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to examine factors related to special education teachers needing additional support from their leaders.

Special Education Teachers and Stress

Several factors contribute to special education teachers' stress. Researchers have noted the need to identify major factors that lead to special education teachers' stress, as stress decreases their quality of teaching (Cancio et al., 2018; Haydon et al., 2018; Park

& Shin, 2020). Park and Shin (2020) conducted a meta-analysis regarding special education teachers' burnout, examining specific components of emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and personal achievement. Furthermore, emotional and physical fatigue, including decreased empathy or compassion fatigue leads to burnout in special education teachers (Bozgeyikli, 2018; Sharp Donahoo et al., 2019). Park and Shin examined and analyzed 28 articles and 13 dissertations published from 1983 to 2018, wherein the findings of their study revealed that several factors significantly contributed to special education teachers' burnout: low self-efficacy, excessive stress, and the lack of support from school administrators and colleagues (Park & Shin, 2020). This finding further underscores the need to develop support programs that integrate the needs of special education teachers (Cancio et al., 2018; Park & Shin, 2020).

Like the assertions of past researchers, Cancio et al. (2018) also noted the need to address the stress experienced by special education teachers (Benndum, 2020; Bettini et al., 2017; Hester et al., 2020; Park & Shin, 2020). Examining this topic further, the researchers conducted surveys with 211 special education teachers regarding their stress and coping strategies to manage stress (Cancio et al., 2018). Like Park and Shin (2020), Cancio et al. also found several factors that contributed to special education teachers' stress: excessive caseloads, multiple responsibilities and roles, increased pressure for student academic success, challenging student behavior, and worries about the security of their positions as special education teachers. For example, Sutjiono et al. (2020) and Sharp Donahoo et al. (2019) cited that some special needs students can have abusive behavior during class. These work-related stressors are essential to address given that

stress experienced by special education teachers significantly decreases their quality of teaching (Cancio et al., 2018). This body of findings presents empirical information regarding the importance of decreasing special education teachers' stress, which could help decrease teacher attrition and ensure the quality of teaching in the field of special education (Cancio et al., 2018; Fu et al., 2020; Park & Shin, 2020). More examination into how special education teachers can be supported by administrators and leaders is crucial, meriting the need for the current study.

Support for Special Education Teachers

Administrative Support

Administrative support can significantly reduce the increasing attrition rate among U.S. special education teachers. Bennedum (2020) and Hester et al. (2020) found that most special education teachers reported a lack of support by their administrators, leading to decreased quality of life and feelings of burnout. In a phenomenological study, Bennedum added that job resources, such as administrative support and collegial support are most crucial in allowing teachers to effectively manage job demands. Hence, school leaders and administrators would do well to use job resources to effectively provide support for novice special education teachers, decreasing overall burnout and attrition in special education settings (Bennedum, 2020; Hester et al., 2020). Overall, administrative support has a potential role in decreasing special education teacher burnout and attrition.

Support in special education settings could also help reduce the attrition of special education teachers. Researchers have found that administrative support is a key influential factor in special education teachers' goals to exit working (Conley & You,

2017; Koonkongsatian, 2017). Conley and You (2017) further examined this topic in their study wherein the researchers included 2,060 special education teachers to explore factors and predictors of special education teachers' goals to exit working. The researchers conducted surveys among the special education teacher respondents regarding workplace factors, teacher satisfaction, teacher commitment, and teachers' intentions to leave (Conley & You, 2017). The findings of their study showed that the factor of administrative support had a significant and direct impact on special education teachers' intentions to leave (Conley & You, 2017). It should also be noted that the factor of teacher team efficacy also had a significant yet indirect impact on special education teachers' goals to exit working (Conley & You, 2017). Hence, administrative support and team efficacy are reportedly the most important factors that influence teachers' intentions to leave.

According to Cunningham (2019) and Shrable (2020), 50% of novice special education teachers leave the teaching profession within the first 5 years of teaching. Cunningham reported the rate of attrition among special education teachers is twice the attrition rate of their general education colleagues. The researchers added that special education teachers are challenged with increasing workloads and the lack of support from the administration (Cunningham, 2019; Shrable, 2020). Cunningham examined this topic further in a qualitative case study wherein the researcher aimed to identify the specific supports needed to expand rates for retaining special education teachers. Some examples of specific supports include administrative support and collegial support (Lovett et al., 2018; Plantiveau et al., 2018). Examining the perspectives of 15 special education

teachers, Cunningham conducted semi-structured interviews and found that the most significant support factors for special education teachers are social support from colleagues and specific and meaningful assistance from administrators. More specifically, the researcher identified specific supports needed by the special education teacher participants: more time for tasks, awareness, and understanding from staff and colleagues, availability of peer mentors, support from administrators about behavioral issues, and work performance feedback (Cunningham, 2019). This finding presents more in-depth information regarding the specific supports needed by special education teachers, which may help improve the significantly high retention rates among this population (Cunningham, 2019). Robinson et al. (2019) cited that mentoring and professional development aids in the retention of novice teachers experiencing low levels of job satisfaction and burnout. Additionally, Plantiveau et al. (2018) that social support from colleagues can increase teachers' job satisfaction and decrease the risk of burnout. Therefore, the support of the administration and other school personnel can mitigate the likelihood of attrition.

Collegial Support

Shrable (2020) also highlighted the importance of examining novice special education teachers' perspectives in addressing the attrition of this population. Through a quantitative correlational research study, the researcher employed 112 novice special education teachers in their study, examining their perceptions about administrator, parent, and colleague support, and their intentions to stay in the field of special education (Shrable, 2020). The findings of the study indicated a statistically significant and positive

correlation between colleague support and intentions to stay in special education (Shrable, 2020). Additionally, the results revealed that administrative support is significantly predictive for deciding on teachers' perceptions of staying (Shrable, 2020). Furthermore, Huyghebaert et al. (2018) added that the excessive workload lowers teachers' level of job performance and job satisfaction and increased emotional exhaustion. This pool of knowledge provides more empirical justification regarding the importance of enhancing administrative support for novice special education teachers, especially to increase the intention to stay and reduce burnout levels, as previously discussed (Cunningham, 2019; Huyghebaert et al., 2018; Kebbi, 2018; Shrable, 2020). Moreover, these past studies could also be replicated in future research by including a larger sample size while also combining both quantitative and qualitative data.

According to Bettini et al. (2018), the experiences of novice special education teachers especially regarding their perceived support are important to investigate. This is especially given that current research is lacking regarding ways that school leaders and administrators could provide support to novice teachers in special education settings (Bettini et al., 2018; Langher et al., 2017; Lovett et al., 2018). Bettini et al. explored this topic further and aimed to identify the relationships between novice special education teachers' societal sources and the capacity to manage their workload. The findings of the researchers revealed that support and interactions with school colleagues significantly predicted novice special education teachers' perceptions of workload manageability (Bettini et al., 2018). That is, novice special education teachers can better manage their workload and stress when they are surrounded by supportive interactions with school

colleagues (Kassis et al., 2019; Plantiveau et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2019). Langher et al. (2017) identified the importance of perceived support of special education teachers to decrease attrition among this population. Langher et al. (2017) highlighted the problem of teacher burnout in special education, most special education teachers report experiences of emotionally demanding work. The emotional demands of teachers' work experiences can be attributed to coping with the difficult behaviors of special needs students and limited support from colleagues or school administrators (Bettini et al., 2020; Kassis et al., 2019; Ziaian-Ghafari & Berg, 2019). Langher et al. examined this topic further by conducting surveys among 276 special education teachers in secondary schools. Using Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educators Survey (MBI-ES) and a survey of perceived collaboration and support, the findings of their study showed that special education teachers' perceived support is significant in decreasing emotional exhaustion and increasing personal accomplishment (Langher et al., 2017). According to O'Brien et al. (2019), supportive working conditions for special education teachers must include collegial support, administrative support, and positive school culture. This body of findings indicates the importance of providing different types of support for novice special education teachers, which may help them better manage their workload, stress, and risk for burnout (Bettini et al., 2018; Langher et al., 2017).

Organizational Support

Researchers have shown that special education teachers support may decrease the risks of psychological distress and burnout. For example, several researchers have noted the need for organizational support in special education to reduce the levels of

psychological torment and burnout prevalent in these settings (Paris et al., 2021; Rude & Miller; 2018; Savolainen et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2019). In a recent study, Paris et al. (2021) examined the role of organizational support in special education settings, specifically in decreasing the high levels of psychological distress and burnout found amongst special education teachers. According to Rude and Miller (2018), organizational support for special education teachers should include providing adequate resources such as learning materials and adequate supporting staff. Paris et al. also examined various levels of psychological distress, including reports of anxiety, depression, stress, among special education teachers. Through a cross-sectional survey, 145 special education teachers reported significant levels of psychological distress and burnout, which significantly contributed to negative psychological flexibility, negative emotional regulations, low levels of perceived organizational support, and job satisfaction (Paris et al., 2021). According to Fu et al. (2020) and Gilmour and Wehby (2020), a challenge special education teachers report is the mental demands of classroom and behavior management of students with individualized needs. Paris et al. concluded from their study results the need to provide psychological interventions for teachers that aim to enhance perceived organizational support in special education settings (Paris et al., 2021). According to Paris et al., increasing organizational support for special education settings could significantly reduce the prevalence of psychological distress and burnout among special education teachers. Sun et al. (2019) concluded similarly in their study, as the researchers examined the role of perceived support on mindfulness and burnout among special education teachers in China. The researchers administered questionnaires in their

study wherein the findings of their research showed that perceived social support significantly was correlated to mindfulness, decreasing special education teachers' burnout (Sun et al., 2019). This body of literature presents initial justification regarding the important role of support in special education settings, which could prevent and mitigate burnout among special education teachers (Paris et al., 2021; Pearson et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2019).

Koonkongsatian (2017) also noted similar outcomes in his research regarding administrative support's role in keeping special education teachers in their careers. Through a qualitative study, Koonkongsatian noted that administrative support of special education teachers is significant in enhancing and promoting teacher retention, as well as increasing the wellbeing of special education teachers. This is also noted in research conducted by Ansley et al. (2019), Billingsley and Bettini (2019), and Fowler et al., (2019) regarding the strong association between job satisfaction and supportive school leadership. Koonkongsatian further underscored the necessity to strengthen administrative support of special education teachers, many teachers who participated in his study did not receive administrative support despite their exhaustive workload. More importantly, teachers in Koonkongsatian's study reported the need for increased communication support in non-teaching duties from their administrators. Additionally, Fan et al., (2019) and Glessner and Johnson (2020) noted that effective leadership of novice teachers should include effective communication among administration, teachers, parents, and students. Thus, organizations need to focus on enhancing administrative

support in special education settings to increase the retention rates of special education teachers.

School leaders and administrators need to strive for clearly defined administrative support of special education teachers, which could increase teacher retention, wellbeing, and increase teacher commitment. Researchers have noted how perceived support can increase teacher commitment in special education (Conley & You, 2017; Koonkongsatian, 2017; Sun et al., 2019). Through a cross-sectional research study, Bibi et al. (2019) examined the role of organizational support on organizational commitment among 85 special education teachers in Pakistan. Utilizing surveys in their study, the researchers included examining special education teachers with at least 6 months of experience in special education (Bibi et al., 2019). Bibi et al. (2019) found that there is a statistically significant and positive correlation between organizational support and teacher commitment. That is, the more support that special education teachers receive, the higher their level of commitment. As such, school leaders and organizations that aim to enhance the commitment and performance of special education teachers in classrooms need to focus on providing and increasing organizational support and other forms of support to novice special education teachers (Bibi et al., 2019; Blanton et al., 2018; Conley & You, 2017; Rude & Miller, 2018).

Mentoring as a Means of Support

Coaching and mentoring are specific forms of support that are beneficial for novice special education teachers. Various researchers have noted mentoring as a concrete way to address the needs of novice special education teachers, especially with

regard to their instructional practices and skills (Cornelius et al., 2020; Lesh, 2020; Soini et al., 2019; Sweigart & Collins, 2017). Cornelius et al. (2020) reported this in their study, as they examined the impact of coaching and mentoring of novice special education teachers. Through multiple baselines across behaviors study, the researchers found that mentoring, professional development, specialized coaching significantly improved the instructional practices of novice special education teachers (Cornelius et al., 2020). This is a significant finding given that the delivery of classroom-focused interventions and effective instructional practices in special education settings help ensure that the need of students is met (Farmer et al., 2018; Francisco et al., 2020). Farmer et al. (2018) added the impact of teachers in the special education classroom should not be overlooked. Opportunities for teacher development for novice teachers allow them to acquire the expertise and abilities to work efficiently and cope with the stressful factors of their job (binti Mosbirin et al., 2020; Minghui et al., 2018). Through professional development opportunities, mentoring with more seasoned special education teachers, and specialized coaching, novice teachers' capabilities to establish "the classroom environment and activities in ways that contribute to students' social experiences could be improved" (Farmer et al., 2018, p. 177). For example, special education teachers need to modify assignments and other coursework to meet the academic needs of each student (Lesh, 2020). Collegial support provides novice teachers the ability to receive helpful feedback and suggestions (Lerang et al., 2021). Thus, overall, special education teachers need to be provided more professional development opportunities and coaching (Cornelius et al., 2020; Farmer et al., 2018).

Preparing Novice Special Education Teachers With Training and Professional Development

Preparing novice special education teachers is essential. Several researchers have shown that novice special education teachers who have undergone training are more supportive of inclusive education and demonstrate higher levels of teachers' preparedness (Aldabas, 2021; Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Mngo and Mngo (2018) noted that training enhances teachers' abilities to create inclusive learning environments when they feel prepared in their research study. The authors examined the teacher perceptions of inclusion in a pilot inclusive education setting in Cameroon. The findings of their study indicated that teachers with training in special education have increased their ability to handle integrated classrooms and educate pupils with special needs (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Aldabas (2021) added to these findings, as the researcher explored the perceptions of 172 special education teachers regarding the barriers faced in teaching and facilitating special education classes. For example, barriers to teaching special education classes include developing and executing individual education plans for students to track academic and behavioral progress (Sanderson et al., 2021; Rios et al., 2020) and creating inclusive classroom environments (Kyttälä et al., 2021; Soini et al., 2019). Administering questionnaires, the findings of Aldabas revealed that a negative school environment acted as a major barrier to their teaching. Additionally, Aldabas found that special education teachers with previous training in inclusive education were more informed of their lack of expertise and were able to identify their need for help with these barriers. As such, this pool of findings indicated the importance of training and development for novice special

education teachers as a way of preparing them for effective classroom management in special education settings (Aldabas, 2021; Mngo & Mngo, 2018; Mueller et al., 2019).

Pre-Service Training

Training for novice special education teachers also has the potential of increasing engagement and teaching effectiveness. Researchers Papi (2018) and Mueller et al. (2019) underscored the significance of providing training for special education teachers. Training for special education teachers includes teaching soft skills such as empathy or self-efficacy (Fernandez et al., 2021), professional development (Hsiao & Sorensen Peterson, 2019), and behavioral skills training essential for working with special needs students (Kirkpatrick et al., 2019). Mueller et al. interviewed preservice special education teachers who participated in a tailored individualized education program. The findings of their study showed that most teachers reported positive experiences from the training program (Mueller et al., 2019). Specifically, preservice special education teachers reported that through the training, they were able to prepare for their challenges in the classroom, learning from their mistakes (Mueller et al., 2019). Jones and Peterson-Ahmad (2017) noted similar findings in their research, as they investigated ways to prepare novice special education teachers through mini-conferencing. Like Mueller et al., Jones and Peterson-Ahmad conducted an individualized education plan process for training novice special education teachers, only via mini-conferencing. The researchers found that after the tailored individualized education sessions, teachers reported increased engagement as well as more knowledge in facilitating collaboration (Jones & Peterson-Ahmad, 2017). As noted by Kebbi (2018) and Hagaman and Casey (2018), a lack of

support and cooperation from collegial and administrative support adds to the work-related stress of special education teachers. This body of knowledge provides further empirical information regarding the impact of training for novice special education teachers, which may be used as a tool or modality to enhance teacher effectiveness, engagement, and classroom management skills (Jones & Peterson-Ahmad, 2017; Mueller et al., 2019).

However, one presenting limitation in previous studies is identifying whether novice special education teachers receive the training that is needed for effective classroom management (Flower et al., 2017; Myers et al., 2017). As such, there is a gap in the literature regarding how special education teachers receive support and training for classroom management skills. Further research is necessary to determine whether special education teachers receive the training that is needed for effective classroom management, especially during their time as preservice teachers (Flower et al., 2017). For instance, according to Shewark et al. (2018), creating an inclusive and positive classroom environment can produce stress for special education teachers if challenges student behavioral issues arise with students. Challenges with behavior management in special education classrooms create negative feelings of frustration and disappointment among teachers (Taylor et al., 2019). Therefore, teacher training should help special education teachers acquire the skills and knowledge to face challenges with classroom management.

Despite its importance in the improvement of teaching in the field of special education, the professional development of novice special education teachers remains scant. As such, various researchers have underscored the need to provide professional

development for novice special education teachers (Davis et al., 2018; Papi, 2018). Also, researchers have noted the need to prepare novice special education teachers to identify and addressing the academic, social, and emotional needs of students with special needs (Davis et al., 2018; Haydon et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2019). Examining this topic further, Papi (2018) qualitatively investigated the challenges faced by novice special education teachers wherein the findings revealed that deficiencies in new special education teachers' professional development of resulted in more challenges in teaching and bureaucracy. Furthermore, the findings of the study also showed that novice special education teachers who lack training and professional development opportunities often feel socially isolated (Papi, 2018; Strassfeld, 2019). Conversely, novice special education teachers that are provided with ample training are more effective in their role in the special education classroom (Davis et al., 2018). For example, Cumming et al. (2021) asserted that training can enhance novice special education teachers' self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to effectively manage an inclusive classroom environment. Davis et al. (2018) examined the impact of video-aided self-reflection to train new special education teachers in connecting special education students' needs. The findings of their study showed positive results regarding the impact of the video-aided self-reflection program in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), differentiated instruction (DI), and universal learning design (UDL) in the special education classroom (Davis et al., 2018). However, the studies by Davis et al. and Papi did not examine an intervention for addressing the classroom management skills of novice special education teachers, which merits the need for further research on this topic.

According to Mrstik et al. (2018) and Grygas Coogle et al. (2018), the use of video clips and online training could also provide the needed support and guidance in professional development for novice special education teachers. Mrstik et al. examined the impacts of mentor instruction as a support modality for novice special education teachers. Further exploring this topic, the researchers conducted professional development sessions for three novice special education teachers, providing teachers with short video clips (Mrstik et al., 2018). The findings of their study showed improvements in novice special education teachers' use of visual supports in their special education classrooms, resulting in more effective teaching (Mrstik et al., 2018). In another study, Grygas Coogle et al. focused on examining the impact of online training for novice early childhood special education teachers. The researchers used a multiple-probe, single-case design in their study wherein their findings showed that the training program significantly improved novice early childhood special education teachers' usage of communicative strategies in the special education classroom (Grygas Coogle et al., 2018). As a result, novice special education teachers were better able to respond to their students with communication difficulties (Grygas Coogle et al., 2018). Furthermore, the novice teachers reported positive feedback regarding the training intervention (Grygas Coogle et al., 2018). These findings may be used as empirical references for leaders and administrators who aim to find ways to support and train novice special education teachers, especially for strategies in the special education classroom (Grygas Coogle et al., 2018; Mrstik et al., 2018). More research is needed to determine whether the use of

video clips and online training could also lead to improved outcomes in classroom management in special education settings.

Professional development programs can help teachers be more prepared in serving the needs of students in the field of special education. Byrd and Alexander (2020) and Biggs et al. (2019) underscored the need for more preparation, visible school/district support, and more access to personal development opportunities for special education teachers. Delving further into this topic, Byrd and Alexander examined 20 special education teachers' knowledge and skills and their ability to work in an inclusive environment. For example, special education teachers need to modify lesson plans and assignments to accommodate the academic skills of each student and adapt their teaching strategies (Gilmour & Wehby, 2020; Siuty et al., 2018). Byrd and Alexander found that these skills and knowledge are needed by teachers in an inclusive classroom: decision making based on evaluation data; empathetic compassion for students with special needs; and promoting effective communication among other people who are also involved in the education of these students (Byrd & Alexander, 2020). According to the researchers, professional development programs made accessible to special education teachers could meet these necessary skills and knowledge for teaching inclusive classrooms (Byrd & Alexander, 2020; Monteiro et al., 2019; Tümkaya & Miller, 2020).

Professional development programs and training help teachers develop the competencies needed for support. Reitman and Karge (2019) noted the importance of teachers' perceptions of professional competence as being a factor in the retention of novice teachers. As cited by Antoniou et al. (2020) and Kebbi (2018), novice teachers

need to believe they will effectively teach their students and feel prepared to meet the individualized academic needs of their students. Adding to these findings, Biggs et al. (2019) outlined several competencies needed for an efficient special education teacher. The researchers delved further into this topic and conducted interviews with 22 special education teachers and paraprofessionals to identify special education teacher competencies for development (Biggs et al., 2019). The findings of the study showed that teachers need to be equipped by developing the following competencies in the field of special education: knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Biggs et al., 2019). This body of findings presents some of the core competencies needed for effective special education teachers (Biggs et al., 2019; Byrd & Alexander, 2020; Mintz, 2019). These findings could be used by administrators and policymakers in developing more support and training opportunities for special education teachers, specifically embedding the outlined competencies for teachers in the field of special education (Biggs et al., 2019; Byrd & Alexander, 2020). Furthermore, this body of knowledge presents more empirical information regarding the significance of providing more professional development opportunities for novice special education teachers, ensuring that they are equipped and ready to address the needs of students with special needs (Biggs et al., 2019; Byrd & Alexander, 2020).

Professional development is important, specifically in developing new teachers' usage of universal classroom management. Several researchers have noted the significant impact of professional development for novice teachers on their classroom management practices (Hirsch et al., 2019; Strassfeld, 2019). For one, Hirsch et al. (2019) outlined

various universal classroom management practices in their study, including opportunities to respond, praise, pre-correct, which could help mitigate challenging and disruptive behavior of students with special needs. The use of universal classroom management strategies relates to the importance of teaching soft skills (Fernandes et al., 2021) and behavioral skills training (Kirkpatrick et al., 2019) for novice special education teachers. Hirsch et al. (2019) added universal classroom management practices can help enhance student engagement and increase academic achievement in the special education classroom. Examining this topic further among novice teachers, the researchers Hirsch et al. conducted a professional development workshop on universal classroom management practices with six novice teachers. The results from their pilot program showed that a program of professional development significantly improved novice teachers' practice, increased student engagement, and decreased disruptive behavior reports of students in the classroom (Hirsch et al., 2019). Botha and Rens (2018) asserted that special education teacher training programs and education help provide novice teachers with the skills and knowledge required to meet the needs of their students. However, Hirsch et al. (2019) did not concentrate on novice special education teachers but novice general education teachers only. This study's findings can be replicated and further examined in the context of novice special education teachers and their classroom management skills and practices of universal classroom management (Hirsch et al., 2019).

Like Hirsch et al. (2019), Strassfeld (2019) underscored the importance of preparing and training novice special education teachers for special education teaching and collaboration. That is, training for novice special education teachers is crucial to

improve classroom outcomes in special education settings. According to Strassfeld, preservice special education teachers' and/or novice special education teachers' knowledge and skills in the special education field can be enhanced by providing available resources, support, and insight. Collegial and mentor support provides insight into where teachers can increase their teaching skills (Mrstik et al., 2019). Examples of available resources include adequate material resources such as books and instructional materials (Siuty et al., 2018), administrative support (Mustafa et al., 2020; Pazez & Yates, 208). To date, there is a limited number of available special education teacher preparation programs that aim to enhance teacher preparedness in the special education classroom (Hirsch et al., 2019; Strassfeld, 2019). This calls out the need to further examine the available resources and support for novice special education teachers, which is crucial to their effectiveness, wellbeing, and quality of life (Hirsch et al., 2019; Soini et al., 2019; Strassfeld, 2019). Special education teachers need to be evaluated to determine methods for providing them more support.

School Administrator Evaluation of Special Education Teachers

Special education teacher evaluation is an important topic to discuss in the improvement of instruction delivery in classrooms. Researchers have noted that teacher evaluation for special education is crucial to the improvement of special education teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Glowacki & Hackmann, 2016; Snyder & Pufpaff, 2021). According to Snyder and Pufpaff (2021), the current version of special education teacher evaluation is not tailored for special education settings and thus lacks beneficial information for the special education teacher and their administrator.

Glowacki and Hackmann (2016) explored this topic further and examined the perspectives of elementary principals and administrators of the efficacy of special education teacher evaluations. Esterhazy et al. (2021) asserted that support for special education teachers can include more experienced teachers observing and reviewing the teaching practices of novice teachers for example. Using online questionnaires, Glowacki and Hackmann examined the perspectives of Illinois public elementary school principals regarding special educator evaluation, including how this impacts their professional development and job performance (Glowacki & Hackmann, 2016). Among 1,551 respondents, the findings of their study showed that evaluation systems were not optimal in evaluating special education teachers (Glowacki & Hackmann, 2016). Their findings further revealed that principals and administrators providing feedback to special education teachers are more crucial to their professional development and job performance improvement (Glowacki & Hackmann, 2016). For example, collegial support for novice teachers should include the discussion and exchange of ideas and feedback (Kassis et al., 2019; Lerang et al., 2021).

Administrators' Training as Related to Evaluation of Special Education Teachers

Researchers have examined the perspectives of administrators' training and support connected to assessing special education teachers and found a lack of training and preparation among school administrators (Lawson & Knollman, 2017; Rodl et al., 2018). For instance, Rodl et al. (2018) delved into this topic of administrators evaluating their special education teachers. The researchers stated that administrators had the responsibility of observing and evaluating special education teachers, ensuring that their

job performance is optimal (Rodl et al., 2018). As cited by Bettini et al. (2020), a lack of support from administrators leads to occupational stress among special education teachers that negatively impacts motivation and job performance. Rodl et al. administered surveys to 929 school administrators in California wherein their findings showed that most school administrators were not adequately trained and prepared to administer evaluation for special education teachers. This is because administrators did not have any prior experience in special education and did not undergo any evaluation training in special education (Rodl et al., 2018). As such, administrators were less confident in their role as evaluators of special education teachers than they were in their role as evaluators of general education teachers (Rodl et al., 2018). Lawson and Knollman (2017) conducted a similar study, school administrators' assessments of evaluating special education teachers. The researchers conducted interviews with three school administrators in which their findings showed that more training is needed and reported by administrators for evaluating special education teachers, which is consistent with the conclusions of Rodl et al. and Lawson and Knollman (2017).

Therefore, it is worth noting that administrators need to be trained in evaluating special education teachers, especially administrators without any prior background in special education. Training for administrators could help ensure effective job performance among special education teachers, especially where classroom management is concerned (Khasawneh, 2020; Lawson & Knollman, 2017; Rodl et al., 2018). This is because there are significant differences between the evaluation of general and special education teachers, especially in terms of instructional content and classroom

management skills (Lawson & Knollman, 2017; Rodl et al., 2018; Specht & Metsala, 2018). Aramburo and Rodl (2020) also underscored the need to train school administrators, especially in evaluating and supporting special educators in and out of classroom settings. For example, school administrators can provide support to special education teachers by encouraging collaboration among staff (McKenna et al., 2019) and providing effective leadership (Bagley & Tang, 2018; Cancio et al., 2018). Aramburo and Rodl conducted an exploratory study regarding this topic and used secondary data analysis of a survey to examine school administrator confidence when evaluating special educators. The findings of the authors' study showed that training for special education teacher evaluation significantly enhanced the level of administrator confidence in supporting and evaluating special education teachers (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020).

Furthermore, the results of the study showed that administrators with at least one special education credential were more confident and capable of supporting and evaluating special education teachers (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020). This pool of findings has significant implications for school districts that aim to increase support for special education teachers in the classroom, specifically through administrators and evaluation (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020; Bagley & Tang, 2018; Cancio et al., 2018). This body of findings could be used by school leaders that aim to find ways to enhance the classroom management skills of special education teachers (Bagley & Tang, 2018; Kozikoğlu, 2018; Rodl et al., 2018). Administrators first need to be trained in evaluating special education teachers regarding their classroom management skills before identifying and finding ways to support them in special education settings (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020).

One area for administrators to evaluate how teachers need support is to determine if they are effectively managing their classroom.

Classroom Management

Teachers need to have effective classroom management. According to Gage et al. (2018), the classroom management skills of teachers have significant and direct effects on their students' academic achievement and behavioral outcomes. That is, several researchers have noted that classroom management could lead to improved student outcomes (Gage et al., 2018; Reinke et al., 2018; Yildiz, 2017).

Behavioral Management

Yildiz (2017) noted this in his research, examining classroom management and student accomplishment in five elementary schoolrooms. The researcher spent 150 class hours conducting observations in special education settings (Yildiz, 2017). The researcher included classrooms with teachers who have at least one student with special learning needs (Yildiz, 2017). The findings of the study showed that teachers who used classroom management strategies were less likely to report problematic classroom behaviors and more likely to report student success (Yildiz, 2017). Reinke et al. (2018) reported similar outcomes in their group randomized controlled trial study. The researchers included 105 teachers and 1,817 students in their study; the findings showed that improvements in classroom management resulted in decreased student emotional dysregulation with students exhibiting prosocial behaviors (Reinke et al., 2018). According to Haydon et al. (2018), the behavioral management of special needs students can create increased stress for special education teachers and induce feelings of anger,

anxiety, frustration, and tension among teachers. These negative feelings are associated with teachers monitoring and working to improve the challenging behaviors of students (Antoniou et al., 2020). This pool of knowledge presents empirical findings regarding the significance of classroom management skills and strategies in enhancing social and emotional competence, as well as academics while decreasing disruptive behaviors (Reinke et al., 2018; Yildiz, 2017).

Academic Management

In addition to overall improvements in teacher-reported student behavior, the academic outcomes of students also significantly improved with successful classroom management tactics (Reinke et al., 2018; Yildiz, 2017). According to Adigun (2018) and Lazarus (2019), most students with learning disabilities, for example, experience challenges with academics such as reading, writing, and math skills. Also, students experience low academic performance and a lack of motivation to learn (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021; Nilholm, 2020). It should be noted that studies by Yildiz (2017) and Reinke et al. (2018) did not solely focus on K-12 novice special education teachers in special education classrooms; thus, the effectiveness of classroom management might vary. Nonetheless, these findings could be used as initial references to focus on classroom management for novice special education teachers, which merit further research.

There are various components of classroom management in special education settings. Several researchers have underscored the importance of preparing special education teachers to implement successful classroom instructional and behavioral

management (Mitchell et al., 2017; Schles & Robertson, 2019; Yildiz, 2017). For instance, Mitchell et al. (2017) outlined that effective classroom management in schools includes operative classroom instructional and behavioral management. These components are all key to guarantee student academic and social accomplishment, as also noted by Yildiz (2017). Schles and Robertson (2019) also noted how performance feedback and implementation of evidence-based practices could lead to improved student outcomes. Schles and Robertson delved further into this study and examined how preservice special education teachers prepare for the implementation of evidence-based practices. Examining five studies in their review of literature, the researchers found a significant relationship between evidence-based practices such as performance feedback in enhancing student outcomes (Schles & Robertson, 2019). Also, Billingsley and Bettini (2019) and Fowler et al. (2019) asserted that increased collegial support is one strategy to enhance the effectiveness of novice special education teachers' classroom management. This pool of findings provides more empirical information regarding the impact of effective classroom management in schools, especially in improving student outcomes (Gage et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2017; Schles & Robertson, 2019). Herman et al. (2018) added that special education teachers with higher levels of stress and burnout are more likely to negatively impact the student outcomes in their classes, so it is important for teachers to cope with their stress (Pearson et al., 2021). There is a need to further examine this topic, however, on the abilities of novice special education teachers in implementing effective classroom management in their classrooms.

Therefore, it is essential to examine different evidence-based schoolroom management practices that are essential in special education settings (Cooper et al., 2018; Gage et al., 2018; Myers et al., 2017). There are several general categories of evidence-based schoolroom management practices: based on antecedents, based on instructions, based on consequences, and (d) based on self-management practices (Cooper et al., 2018; Javed, 2019; Mangrum, 2020). Gage et al. (2018) outlined more specific evidence-based classroom management practices in their research: instructing and supervising students actively (i.e., teaching), (b) creating chances for pupils to respond, and (c) providing students with feedback. Classroom management with learners in special education settings requires more advanced skills (Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Myers et al., 2017; Reinke et al., 2018). As such, there is a need to further research whether novice special education teachers receive training and ample support on practicing these outlined evidence-based classroom management practices (Cooper et al., 2018; Gage et al., 2018; Mangrum, 2020).

According to Cooper et al. (2018), teachers must be prepared and trained in all categories of classroom management. Various researchers have noted the significant role of evidence-based classroom management practices in improving student behaviors and engagement in the classroom (Cooper et al., 2018; Gage et al., 2018; Minghui et al., 2018). Cooper et al. conducted a survey study on this topic, examining the perceived effectiveness of several evidence-based classroom management practices among 248 educators in the United States. The researchers found that only 33% of teacher respondents received formal training in most of the classroom management practices

(Cooper et al., 2018). This is significant information given that formal training on classroom management practices significantly predicts the use of effective classroom management practices (Cooper et al., 2018; Minghui et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2020). The study of Cooper et al., however, did not proceed to examine this topic among special educators in the US; rather, the authors' research focused on the general education teacher population group. Nonetheless, these findings could be used as a reference to replicate the findings of the study among special educators in the United States, their received formal training on evidence-based classroom management practices, and the use of classroom management practices after training (Cooper et al., 2018; Minghui et al., 2018).

Similarly, Gage et al. (2018) also examined the impact of teachers' implemented evidence-based classroom management practices on their students' behaviors and engagement. Focusing on the elementary study, the researchers employed latent class analysis among 1,242 teacher-student dyads in 65 elementary schools (Gage et al., 2018). The findings of their study showed that evidence-based classroom management practices significantly decreased the rate of classroom disruptions and increased the time of student engagement in instruction (Gage et al., 2018). Furthermore, their findings revealed a significant and predictive relationship between the lack of evidence-based classroom management practices and low rates of student engagement (Gage et al., 2018). Student engagement in special education classrooms is essential for those students who have lower levels of motivation to learn and lower academic performance as asserted by Crispel and Kasperski (2021) and Nilhon (2020). The same predictive relationship

between class management practices and student engagement was also found between lack of evidence-based classroom management practices and increases in disruptive student behavior (Gage et al., 2018). However, Gage et al. focused on general education classrooms, not examining special education settings; this limitation is like that of Cooper et al.'s (2018) study. This body of findings could therefore be used as an initial reference in underscoring the potential and significant role of classroom management practices in increasing student engagement and decreasing disruptions. These findings could be further examined in the context of special education settings (Cooper et al., 2018; Gage et al., 2018).

Special education teachers need to hone their classroom management skills while undergoing their certification programs and preparation programs. Researchers have noted that classroom management skills are vital for special education teachers while completing their teacher preparation program (Flower et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2018). Flower et al. (2017) further explored this topic and aimed to determine whether teacher preparation programs were adequately preparing teachers in effective classroom management. According to Mintz (2019), the transition for novice special education teachers from pre-service education to teaching a class requires them to be prepared to manage students' academic progress and create an inclusive learning environment (Hudson et al., 2018; Monteiro et al., 2019; Tümkaya & Miller, 2020). Flower et al. focused on preservice teacher preparation programs for both general education and special education teachers and collected data using surveys. The findings of their study showed that preservice educators were often trained and taught universal classroom

management strategies, rather than specific classroom management skills and strategies for managing problematic student behaviors (Flower et al., 2017). Furthermore, the results of the study revealed that there are significant differences between general education teacher qualifications curricula and special education teacher qualifications courses in managing student behavior in the classroom and behavioral assessments (Flower et al., 2017). Myers et al. (2017) and Yulianti et al. (2018) concurred, noting that classroom management with exceptional learners is vastly different than with general learners.

There are several ways to support and provide training in classroom management for special education teachers. Without providing training and support for special education teachers with regards to learning strategies and classroom management, teachers cannot meet the needs of students with special education needs (Byrd & Alexander, 2020; Chao et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2018; Strogilos et al., 2020). This is especially because it is common for teachers to report the lack of preparation when it comes to classroom management (Chao et al., 2017; Flower et al., 2017; Onuigbo et al., 2020). That is, teachers lack the knowledge, training, and skills to handle student behaviors in the classroom, which leads to significant challenges to teaching and learning (Baysen & Dakwo, 2018; Flower et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2018). For instance, Garwood et al. (2018), Onuigbo et al. (2020), and Onyishi et al. (2021) added that special education teachers must have the ability to implement behavior modification strategies.

To meet the needs of teachers in learning classroom management, researchers have proposed different ways to enhance classroom management outcomes in special

education settings (Chao et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2018; Peterson-Ahmad, 2018). For instance, Hudson et al. (2018) proposed the use of mixed-reality teaching experiences to help preservice special education teachers. Hudson et al. referred to this approach as Mursion, which was a “mixed-reality environment that allows preservice candidates to practice teaching specially designed scenarios (simulations) with student avatars” (p. 1). Delving further into this topic through a mixed-methods approach, Hudson et al. (2018) examined the impacts of Mursion teaching experiences on 25 special education teachers’ ability to effectively manage a classroom. The findings of their study showed that most special education teachers showed increases in ability and preparation to teach in special education classrooms (Hudson et al., 2018). Teachers in the study also reported how the Mursion experiences allowed them to effectively practice new classroom management skills (Hudson et al., 2018). As such, researchers and administrators can refer to the Mursion approach to provide training and support for novice special education teachers, when developing classroom management expertise (Hudson et al., 2018).

Like the simulation approach proposed by Hudson et al. (2018), Peterson-Ahmad (2018) also noted that special education teachers can be duly prepared for teaching using virtual simulation. Adding to the assertions of Hudson et al., Peterson-Ahmad (2018) added that the provision of virtual simulation should be combined with instructional coaching for preservice special education teachers. The researcher examined this topic in her exploratory case study, exploring the impact of virtual simulations combined with instructional coaching on teachers' preparedness to enter and teach in the special education classroom (Peterson-Ahmad, 2018). The findings of her study indicated that

simulations coupled with specific instructional coaching significantly increased instructional skills and improvements in teachers' classroom management practices (Peterson-Ahmad, 2018). It is therefore worth exploring whether leaders and administrators could support novice special education teachers with their classroom management skills, specifically by providing more advanced opportunities of a virtual simulation environment together with specialized instructional coaching (Hudson et al., 2018; Peterson-Ahmad, 2018).

In another study, Chao et al. (2017) took another approach in honing the classroom management skills of special educators, they underscored the need to provide more training courses for special education teachers. According to Farmer et al. (2018) and Onuigbo et al. (2018) need to adjust how they ask questions in class discussions to accommodate the level of comprehension for special needs students for example. Blanton et al. (2018) cited the need for organizational support of special education teachers to enhance teacher development for novice teachers. The training provides an opportunity for a teacher to develop effective classroom management skills. Chao et al. (2017) explored the topic of classroom management skills in their study, as teachers were tasked to undergo a training course for using educating and learning approaches and schoolroom management to pupils with special education requirements in Hong Kong (Chao et al., 2017). Among 347 teachers, the findings of their study showed that the training significantly increased the teachers' confidence in managing classrooms in inclusive education (Chao et al., 2017). Albeit taking another approach in their study, these findings are consistent with those of Hudson et al. (2018) who also noted the significant

impact of training on special education teachers' confidence and ability to manage special education classrooms. Providing more training for novice special education teachers could therefore increase the confidence of teachers in inclusive education while enhancing their classroom management skills (Chao et al., 2017; Farmer et al., 2018; Hudson et al., 2018; Onuigbo et al., 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

Across the literature, I found that novice special education teacher attrition was significantly high in the United States (Cunningham, 2019; Hosseinabadi & Etemadinezhad, 2018; Shrable, 2020). That is, approximately 50% of novice special education teachers leave the teaching profession within the first 5 years of teaching (Cunningham, 2019; Shrable, 2020). Special education teachers are continuously challenged with increasing workloads and the lack of administrative support, as well as lacking in skills for effective classroom management (Al-Shammari & Hornby, 2020; Chao et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2018; Street et al., 2019). However, current research is lacking on the ways that school leaders and administrators could use to help and support novice special education teachers, creating a significant knowledge gap (Bettini et al., 2018).

Furthermore, current research on special education teachers' classroom management skills with Bandura's (1969) SLT (the study framework) was lacking. This presented a significant gap in literature based on Bandura's SLT providing a robust framework for understanding ways in which novice special education teachers could learn—"observation (environmental), retention (cognitive), reproduction (cognitive), and

motivation” (Bandura & Hall, 2018, p. 20). As such, Bandura’s SLT could provide a more in-depth understanding of how administrators could help provide support for novice special education teachers, specifically through training and learning opportunities (Hjörne & Säljö, 2019; Holzberger & Prestele, 2021; Ismail et al., 2018; Raymond et al., 2020). This topic is important to address given the prevailing and high attrition rate of novice special education teachers in the United States, creating a significant problem for students with special learning needs (Cunningham, 2019; Grant, 2017; Shrable, 2020). Without addressing the current problem of novice special education teacher attrition, a persistent teacher shortage problem in the field of special education will prevail (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Grant, 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Onuigbo et al., 2020).

Researchers have also noted the importance of providing different types of support for novice special education teachers, which may help them better manage their workload, stress, and risk for burnout (Bettini et al., 2018; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Grant, 2017; Strogilos et al., 2020; Tikkanen et al., 2020). More specifically, preparing novice special education teachers for the specific challenges in special education settings is key to their confidence, self-efficacy in classroom management, and effectiveness in the classroom (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020; Chao et al., 2017; Soini et al., 2019; Talley, 2017; Taylor et al., 2019). There is a need to provide ample training and professional development opportunities for novice special education teachers, improving teaching and learning strategies, as well as classroom management to support students with special

educational needs (Aldabas, 2021; Chao et al., 2017; Jones & Peterson-Ahmad, 2017; Kirkpatrick et al., 2019; Minghui et al., 2018; Mueller et al., 2019).

However, research focusing on how leaders and administrators could help and support novice special education teachers in improving their classroom management skills is limited (Hudson et al., 2018; Mrstik et al., 2018). Davis et al. (2018) and Grygas Coogle et al. (2018) examined interventions and support programs to help prepare novice special education teachers in meeting the needs of their students with special needs. Mrstik et al. (2018) researched providing mentor instruction to help novice special education teachers in the special education classroom. However, these past research studies by Mrstik et al., Davis et al., and Grygas Coogle et al. do not include to examine an intervention for addressing the classroom management skills of novice special education teachers, which warrant the necessity for additional study on this subject.

Thus, there is a need for further exploration into administrators' support of special education teachers (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020; Hester et al., 2020; Kebbi, 2018; Mustafa et al., 2020; Rodl et al., 2018). Past scholars have presented limited past empirical research studies, either quantitative or qualitative, on K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' schoolroom management skills (Gage et al., 2018; Glessner & Johnson, 2020; Hester et al., 2020; Rodl et al., 2018). Researchers should address filling this gap by further understanding that administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills could help improve the current ways and practices of novice special education teacher preparation (Antoniou et al., 2020; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Monteiro et al., 2019; Tmkaya & Miller, 2020).

Chapter 3 contains a discussion of this qualitative research study and systematic steps employed to address the research question regarding this topic of K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. Chapter 3 also includes an outline of the used research design, basic qualitative design, which is in line with the purpose of the study, the population of novice special education teachers that have been teaching for 5 years or less in Ohio, and the sampling method. Chapter 3 also includes a discussion of detailed methodologies, including methodologies for data collection, data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness of the findings of this qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. In Chapter 2, the literature surrounding the proposed study was reviewed, including the conceptual framework and the research gap motivating the study. Now, in Chapter 3, the research methods are discussed in detail. This chapter expands on the discussion about the Nature of the Study heading in Chapter 1. The chapter begins with a discussion of the qualitative research method and the basic qualitative research design. Then, the role of the researcher within the study is discussed. Third is the research methodology. This section addresses the key topics of participant selection, research instrumentation, the procedures, and data analysis. Following the methodology is a section addressing issues of trustworthiness and research ethics. The chapter ends by summarizing the chapter's contents.

Research Design and Rationale

To recall, the current study was guided by three research questions as follows:

RQ1: How do K-12 administrators describe their leadership strategies in supporting novice special education teachers' classroom management?

RQ2: How do novice special education teachers describe the strategies administrators use to support them in the area of classroom management?

RQ3: What assistance from administrators do novice special education teachers believe they need to improve their classroom management skills?

The research paradigm or method within which the current study was situated was that of the qualitative method. Qualitative research methods are descriptive and

exploratory in nature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In a broad sense, qualitative research entails exploring a phenomenon through the subjective experiences of those who have personally experienced the phenomenon (Sawatsky et al., 2019). Using these experiences, the researcher in a qualitative study seeks to create a detailed description of the subjective experience of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A qualitative researcher ensures that the study completely examines the phenomenon by asking open-ended research questions (Sawatsky et al., 2019). Such research questions use words such as *what*, *how*, or *why*, and allow for a full spectrum of potential responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this way, qualitative research is ideal for exploring the full range of perceptions and experiences that are present within the study population (Sawatsky et al., 2019).

In the present study, a qualitative approach was appropriate for several reasons. First and foremost, the research pertained to a broad and subjective phenomenon, namely the experience of support. Furthermore, this phenomenon could only be understood in open-ended, qualitative terms, as characterized by the research questions of the study, each of which was a question of *how* or *what*. The study was also benefited from the open-ended exploration of the qualitative tradition in the sense that there was little upon which to base a preconceived set of potential responses. Hence, the study created significantly greater value by exploring the issue without such expectations and preconceptions.

Within the qualitative research method, there are a multitude of research designs. The research design for this study was a basic or generic qualitative design. Basic

qualitative research is most applicable in cases where the research topic is clearly qualitative in nature but does not conform to any other specific qualitative research design (Thorne, 2016). In addition, a basic qualitative design has the advantage of offering a researcher the flexibility to adopt specific aspects of individual qualitative research designs without using those designs in their totality (Burdine et al., 2021). For example, a researcher using a basic qualitative design may draw the multiple data sources technique from a case study design (Thorne, 2016). A basic qualitative design therefore offers exceptional versatility and ability to describe and interpret key themes regarding the research problem (Burdine et al., 2021).

In this study, a basic qualitative approach was appropriate for several reasons. As discussed above, the qualitative method was appropriate. However, no specific design would be a good fit. For example, case study research focuses on a single case in greater depth using multiple data sources (Yin, 2017). This offered especially good contextualization but would limit the study to that context only. On the other hand, phenomenological designs allow for a great deal of depth (Moustakas, 1994). However, phenomenology would not allow the issue to be studied from multiple perspectives. Therefore, a basic qualitative design was the best fit, allowing for the integration of multiple data sources and significant depth without localizing to a single case. In addition, the flexibility of a basic qualitative study was put to good use in terms of this integration, offering a more nuanced depiction of the phenomenon from multiple points of view.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is that of the primary instrument of data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hence, I was the main instrument of data collection for the study. Beyond that, however, my role was that of an observer. To enforce the role of observer and avoid my personal biases affecting the study, I drew upon the phenomenological practice of bracketing as a part of the basic qualitative design's methodological flexibility. This process involved acknowledging and setting aside my biases and preconceptions to view the study data with new eyes, as per Moustakas (1994).

There were two primary potential sources of bias that I needed to bracket. The first was that I was a researcher with a background in educational theory and practice. This bias could have served to color my expectations of the study, especially regarding what I had read in the literature. Secondly, I was known to one school district in the area under study; thus, I had some personal interest or stake in the study issues in some limited capacity that I needed to bracket. To minimize the effects of this bias, I attempted to avoid drawing data from specific staff members with whom I had a preexisting relationship. This process should help to both limit my bias as a researcher and the participants' social desirability bias as my acquaintances. No other ethical issues, conflicts of interest, or power imbalances were expected to play a meaningful role in the current study.

Methodology

This section addresses the methodology, or how the study is conducted in practical terms. Hence, issues addressed in the methodology section pertain to the study's participants and the research materials. In addition, this topic includes the data collection procedures and how the data will be analyzed once they are obtained.

Participant Selection

There were two populations under study in the present study. These populations were all novice special education teachers (those with no more than 5 years of experience) and all school administrators supporting novice special education teachers in the United States. The target populations were delimited to all novice special education teachers and all supporting administrators at a single school district in the state of Ohio. Potential participants were excluded from the study if they were teachers who had taught more than 5 years, teachers who did not teach in special education classrooms, or administrators with no current or former experience supporting novice special education teachers. Administrators were required to have at least 1 year of experience in that role.

From within this population, a preliminary sample of five to seven novice special education teachers and five to seven administrators were recruited for a total of 10-14 participants. The final sample size of a qualitative study could not be determined in advance, as it depended on saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). Saturation is when new participants no longer supply novel points to a researcher (Saunders et al., 2018). The current preliminary sample was reasonably in line with standard qualitative sample sizes for PhD-level qualitative research, however (Mason, 2010). The final sample could have

included more participants if the preliminary sample did not reach saturation in one or both groups.

The recruitment of participants was carried out as follows. First, a specific school district to recruit was identified. Once this district was identified and agreed to participate, a recruitment email was provided to the district administration to provide it to the administrators and novice special education teachers it employs. Those teachers and administrators expressing interest could contact the researcher by phone or email, at which point an interview was scheduled. Should one district prove insufficient to meet the needs of saturation, a second was contacted in the same fashion.

Instrumentation

As above, I was the primary instrument of data collection. To collect data, I relied on two sets of qualitative, semistructured interviews. The semistructured interview is a standard tool in qualitative research, prized for affording both structure and a degree of freedom (Kallio et al., 2018). Semistructured interviews are structured in the sense that they rely on an interview guide with prepared questions (Kallio et al., 2018). At the same time, the researcher has the flexibility to ask additional questions or follow up on participants' responses (Kallio et al., 2018).

As there were two participant groups, there were two interview guides (see Appendices A and B). These interview guides consisted of a list of key topics as well as a set of around 15 questions to guide the interview. I developed the interview guides for both groups myself; therefore, no permission to use the instruments was necessary. Each

interview question across both guides was directly linked to one or more of the study's research questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Prior to any data collection, I sought site authorization at the school district level. This process entailed contacting the office of the superintendent and requesting permission to conduct the study at the school district. Preliminary site authorization efforts were already under way, using a site authorization request letter. Once site authorization was obtained (see Appendix D), IRB approval for the current study was sought. Once site authorization and IRB approval had been secured, I prepared a recruitment email. This study detailed the study, what would be required of participants, and how participants could contact me. I asked that the district administration send the recruitment email to all novice special education teachers and administrators in the district using their school-related email addresses. If the administrators were willing, I instead sent the email myself. However, I expected that the district administration would prefer not to provide me with the contact information of all novice special education teachers and administrators in the district to do so. By providing them with a pre-drafted recruitment email that they could easily send to prospective participants, I aimed to avoid this problem if it should arise. In addition, it was my impression that the prospective participants would give the invitation greater credence should it be sent through the district. I asked those who responded to the recruitment email to verify their eligibility.

Once eligibility was verified, I provided participants with informed consent information and schedule an interview. Owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all

interviews for the current study were virtual in nature. Prior to the interview, the participants were required to read and electronically sign the informed consent information. Each interview was conducted using Zoom teleconferencing software. Interviews lasted 30-60 minutes with each participant and were audio recorded, then later transcribed. Participants were offered the opportunity to review and correct their transcripts. The transcripts were then loaded into NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

Once collected, all data were stored in a password-protected folder in a flash drive. When not in use, I stored the flash drive in a locked desk drawer. Only I and authorized university staff members had access to these data. The data will be preserved for 5 years following the publication of the research, then will be completely deleted using a virtual shredder program.

Data Analysis Plan

The data for the two sets of interviews were analyzed separately. Both analyses, however, proceeded using identical analytical techniques. All data analysis was conducted with the assistance of NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Phillips & Lu, 2018). The data analysis protocol was that of Clarke and Braun's (2014) six step qualitative thematic analysis. The steps were as follows.

The first step of thematic analysis is to build familiarity (Clarke & Braun, 2014). In this stage, I carefully reviewed the raw data (i.e., the interview transcripts) multiple times. Such a review ensured the research was grounded in the data and reflective of them. The second step is the crucial coding step (Clarke & Braun, 2014). In the coding

step, I, with the aid of NVivo, identified and highlighted key ideas or coders across the data. The list of codes I applied to these ideas consisted of codes drawn from an initial codebook I developed based on the literature and emergent codes that arose from the data. Once the data are coded, the third step is to identify themes (Clarke & Braun, 2014). Themes reflected ideas that linked together multiple individual codes into more complete constructs. Themes were identified based on the repeated co-occurrence of codes, or through other patterns in the codes across multiple interviews.

Once the list of themes is drafted, the fourth step is to check its validity (Clarke & Braun, 2014). The list of codes was validated by cross-checking it back against the data. This ensured that each theme was a complete and accurate reflection of the underlying idea in the data that it purported to represent. Then, the fifth step is cross-checking the themes against one another (Clarke & Braun, 2014). In this step, I made sure that each theme was not only a complete idea, but that it was adequately unique from other themes. If any changes to themes were made, these new or changed themes were subjected to step four. Finally, the sixth step in thematic analysis is to list and recontextualize the themes (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the qualitative counterpart to validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). There are four components to trustworthiness: issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these is addressed in turn.

Credibility reflects internal validity from the quantitative realm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hence, ensuring credibility meant ensuring that the current study was

internally consistent. This was achieved foremost through the careful alignment chain between study components. The research problem of the study was central and gave rise to the purpose. The research questions were derived directly from the study purpose. Then, as discussed in this chapter, careful steps were taken to ensure that the data collected were appropriate to answering the research questions. For example, the interview guide was validated by an expert review. Moreover, the entirety of the research methodology had been developed with reference to the research questions, including the choice of methodology, the choice of specific research design, and the choice of population, had been developed with the explicitly intention of enabling a study that could answer the research questions. In addition, to ensure that the results were reflective of the data themselves, the data analysis plan described above contained two steps (step one and step four) aimed at ensuring the analysis was deeply grounded in the data and reported only information given by the participants.

Transferability reflects external validity from the quantitative realm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Transferability refers to how well the results can be applied beyond the study scope. The key to transferability was not creating widely generalizable results (although member-checking was used to safeguard that the results did reflect the participants' perceptions accurately); instead, transferability was created by assuring those future researchers or others using the results could tell clearly under what circumstances they were obtained (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This entailed, in particular, the careful delineation of where the study was conducted and who the participants of the study were (Sawatsky et al., 2019). To address this, Chapter 3 included an in-depth

description of who the participants were and how they were selected and recruited. In addition, once data were collected, Chapter 4 began with a description of the sample, including the rough demographics of the participants and as much detail as possible about the study site without breaching confidentiality. These ensured the transferability of the results.

Dependability reflects reliability from the quantitative realm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hence, the main issue in establishing dependability was how well the results answered the research questions. In addition to alignment, dependability was established through the careful validation of the interview guide by an expert panel and mock interviews. Dependability was established by allowing the participants to check their responses and correct transcripts as needed. These steps helped to ensure that the current study was dependable in terms of answering the research questions and accurately reflecting the participants' responses.

Finally, confirmability reflects objectivity from the quantitative realm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hence, the key issue in establishing confirmability was avoiding or minimizing bias. The primary strategy employed in this study for achieving confirmability was phenomenological bracketing. Bracketing consists of the process of acknowledging one's own experiences, preconceptions, beliefs, and biases. By acknowledging these factors, I deliberately set them aside and viewed the data with new eyes. As a stronger form of reflexivity, bracketing helped me set aside biases and preconceptions. To demonstrate the confirmability of the results, I also made liberal use of quoting the participants of the study when reporting on the results.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical research practices were adhered to at all stages of the research. This included ensuring the *Belmont Report* principles of beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (Miracle, 2016). Prior to collecting any data, IRB approval was obtained. Any changes requested by the IRB were enacted. Furthermore, site authorization was sought prior to recruitment of participants. All participants were required to review and accept informed consent information prior to participating in the study. The school district was not informed of who agreed to participate or not.

The confidentiality of participants was protected carefully. Each participant was assigned a code name such as Teacher 1 or Administrator 4. Any identifying information was stripped from the data, and all references to participants were in code name form. Only I and approved university staff had any access to original data files containing participants' information. These data will be stored securely for 5 years following the study, then virtually shredded. At any time prior to the publication of the study, participants could contact me to request withdrawal from the study, at which point their data were expunged.

Overall, the study was not expected to pose any significant risks to participants. Because discussing a circumstance such as having experienced a lack of support could potentially trigger psychological distress in rare circumstances, participants were provided with a low- or no-cost psychological hotline as a precautionary measure. Overall, the study should not only be of minimal risk to participants but offered the

potential for direct material improvements. A copy of the results was provided to the district under study for this purpose.

Summary

In summary, the problem was that K-12 administrators were challenged to consistently implement leadership strategies that supported novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. To address this problem, the purpose of this study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. Chapter 3 discussed the research methods for the study. First, the qualitative research methodology and basic qualitative research design were explicated. Secondly, my role as the primary instrument of data collection was laid out, including the use of phenomenological bracketing. Third was the discussion of key research methods. The populations under study were all novice special education teachers and all school administrators supporting novice special education teachers in the United States. From these populations, a sample of 7-14 of each type of participant was recruited from an Ohio school district. Data were gathered virtually using qualitative, semistructured interviews over Zoom. Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. All four aspects of trustworthiness were achieved, and research ethics were carefully adhered to.

Next, once the study was complete, Chapter 4 included the results of the study. The results included a demographic breakdown of the study participants. The results comprised the results of the two key parallel qualitative thematic analyses of the data from the interviews with the two participant groups.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills in the state of Ohio. This study entailed an investigation of the perspectives of a sample of novice special education teachers to gain insights on their preparedness for issues of student misbehavior as well as the adequacy of the support they received from administrators in terms of being equipped with classroom management skills. K-12 administrators tended to experience challenges in the consistent implementation of leadership strategies that support novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. This study also included an examination of the perceptions of a sample of K-12 administrators. The administrators' insights could reveal factors that influence self-efficacy, perceived success in the role, and even career decisions of special education teachers. This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do K-12 administrators describe their leadership strategies in supporting novice special education teachers' classroom management?

RQ2: How do novice special education teachers describe the strategies administrators use to support them in the area of classroom management?

RQ3: What assistance from administrators do novice special education teachers believe they need to improve their classroom management skills?

This chapter contains the presentation of the results of this study. The context in which the results emerged is also provided in this chapter. The setting and sample of the study are described. The implementation of the data collection and data analysis plans

presented in Chapter 3 as well as any changes to the plans are reported in this chapter.

The results are then presented in the form of themes developed from the thematic analysis of the interview data collected from novice special education teachers and K-12 administrators from the state of Ohio. The results are justified through the report of the trustworthiness techniques applied to the methodology. Lastly, a summary is provided to conclude this chapter.

Setting

The setting of this study was one school district in the state of Ohio. The sample was five novice special education teachers and five K-12 administrators within the selected school district. Upon the approval of the superintendent to conduct the study in the district, I contacted district administrators via email. I asked the administrators for their interest and willingness to participate in this study as well as for the email address of the novice special education teachers. While the administrators were generally interested in participating in this study, they were hesitant to share their teachers' contact details. Thus, I requested the administrators to use their school email address to forward the recruitment invitation for the study to the teachers. In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the entire participant selection and the data collection process occurred using online platforms for the health and safety of the participants and myself.

The five administrators' duration of relevant leadership Ie ranged from 4-11 years with an average of approximately 8 years. The administrators help the role of a principal apart from A1, who was both a principal and a superintendent. The administrators worked

with one to three novice special education teachers at the time of the interview. The administrators' descriptive information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Administrators' Descriptive Information

Administrator	Years of experience	Position	# of novice special education teachers
A1	4	Superintendent/Principal	3
A2	7	Principal	1
A3	9	Principal	2
A4	7	Principal	2
A5	11	Principal	3

The five novice special education teachers have an average of approximately 2 years of working experience with a range of 1-4 years. Apart from T4 who only taught the sixth grade, the teachers handled multiple levels from K-8. The students with special needs in their classes were classified from mild to severe. T1 and T2 had mixed cases of special needs students in their classes. T2 specified having students with mild to moderate cases. T4 and T5 had students with mild cases, while T3 had students with severe cases. The teachers' descriptive information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Teachers' Descriptive Information

Teacher	Years of experience	Cases of special needs students	Level(s) taught
T1	1	Mixed (not specified)	Mixed (not specified)
T2	4	mild, moderate	K-8
T3	2	severe	K-3
T4	3	mild	6
T5	1	mild	K-2

Data Collection

The data were collected using one-on-one interviews. After participant recruitment, the five novice special education teachers and five administrators from a school district in the state of Ohio received an email containing an electronic copy of the informed consent form. The informed consent form contained the descriptions of the protection of the participants as well as the terms and conditions of participation. All the participants provided a digitally signed copy of the consent form as part of their eligibility to join the data collection procedure. The participants also provided their preferred time and date for the online interview via Zoom. A day prior to the participants' selected schedule, they received an email with a link to the private Zoom meeting room.

The interview was semi-structured in nature. I used an interview protocol to maintain alignment with the purpose of the study throughout all the interviews but asked probing questions as needed to obtain in-depth information. The Zoom interview began with reintroducing me, reintroduction of the study, and recap of the contents of the informed consent form. I also gave the participants an opportunity to ask any questions before the interview began. When the participants were ready, three questions about the participants' relevant work experience were asked. The interview proceeded with focusing and probing questions. At the end of the interview, the participants were again given a chance to express their concluding statements. They were thanked for their time and participation, and informed of the member checking process in which they were asked to review the accuracy of the information they shared. The interviews lasted for an average of 30 minutes. The interview recordings were immediately transcribed using

Microsoft Word. The Word-formatted transcripts were sent to the participants' email for their review. Modifications in the interview responses were accepted for 7 days. The participants were made aware that if no changes were made within the 7-day timeframe, their transcript was considered final and ready for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis method was thematic analysis. The procedures were in accordance to the six-phase thematic analysis framework devised by Clarke and Braun (2014). The phases of the analysis were sequential but non-linear, which means that the process advanced progressively while going back and forth the phases as needed. The six phases were: (a) building familiarity with the data, (b) coding, (c) identifying preliminary themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) cross-checking and naming themes, and (f) listing and reporting recontextualized themes (Clarke & Braun, 2014). The analysis was completed through the use of the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12.

Building familiarity with the data entailed immersion in the data. I personally conducted and transcribed the interviews. After the participants' transcript review, I continued to immerse in the data through reading all the transcripts twice. I gained early impressions about the data set as a whole. The early impressions were written in a reflexivity journal to keep a record of the thought processes that occurred during the analysis.

The transcripts were then imported to NVivo 12 to begin the coding and theme development processes. In coding the data, I read through each line of the transcripts in search of key ideas that appear meaningful and relevant to the RQs. I did not use a list of

pre-determined codes. Instead, the initial codes emerged from the data inductively. As much as feasible, I ensured that I used participants' words to label the codes to ground the analysis in the data and minimize bias. The coding process entailed a prolonged exposure to the data. After going through the transcripts multiple times, saturation, the point at which no new codes emerged, was reached. I identified 88 initial codes. Sample codes with excerpts from the data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Sample Codes

Codes	Excerpts
facilitating peer-to-peer mentoring	"I offer the peer to peer mentoring with a more tenured teacher."
assist in resolving issues	"As for knowledge, as a team, principal and teacher, we can solve the issues or work through them to a positive deliverable."
meet sponsors	We also have meetings with our sponsors, which is our state authorizers, who's essentially our Department of Education.
leaders providing different perspectives	"So for my teaching method. They are always giving me feedback, just some different ways that I can differentiate my instruction"
leaders giving breaks	"There were times where I had students, and I just didn't know what to do, so they'll take them for a short amount of time sometimes, just to give me that little mental break."

After the coding process, the next phase was to identify preliminary themes. Preliminary themes were developed from comparing and contrasting the codes and finding relationships among them. Relationships may be similarities or differences in the code patterns determined through the co-occurrence of codes. In NVivo, codes with

relationships were grouped under a parent code to represent a hierarchy in which the initial codes were smaller units of meaning while the parent codes were broader and more abstracted units of meaning. The co-occurrences were also automatically counted by “files” or the number of participants and by “reference” or the number of this the code recurred. For instance, the codes “having specialized technical support,” “meet school board,” “meet sponsors,” and “provide resources for student success” shared similar meaning patterns in which administrators’ or leaders’ strategies in supporting novice special education teachers’ classroom management included obtaining resources that would help students become successful in class. As seen in Figure 1, the codes were grouped together under the parent code “obtaining resources for student learning.”

Figure 1

NVivo Hierarchy of Codes

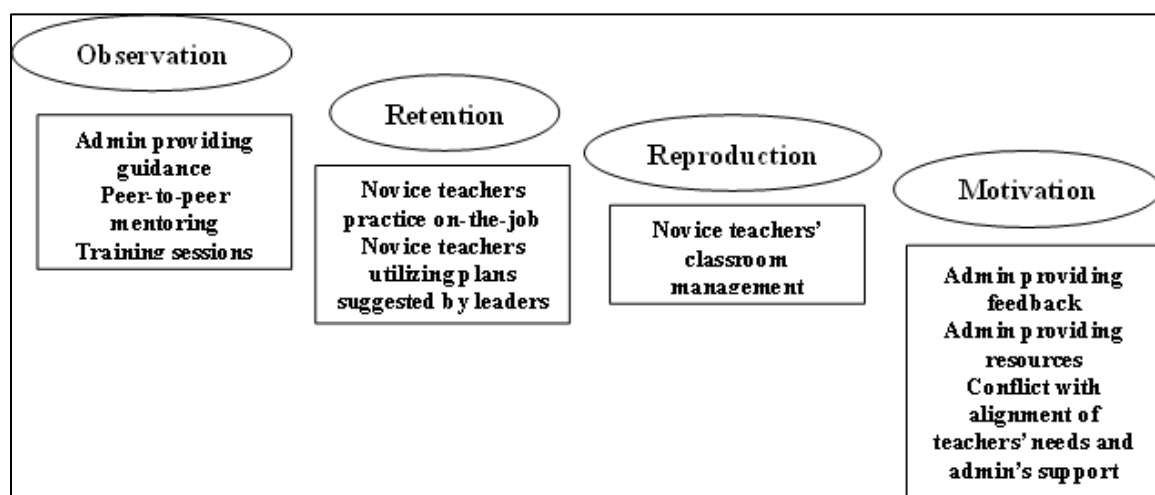
Name	Files	Reference
○ Obtaining resources for student learning	5	8
○ provide resources for student success	3	3
○ having specialized technical support	2	2
○ meet sponsors	2	2
○ meet school board	1	1

Ten preliminary themes emerged. A complete list of preliminary themes with the supporting codes is provided in Appendix D. The themes were reviewed based on their completeness and accuracy in reflecting the underlying ideas shared by the participants in the interviews. The themes were cross-references with the transcripts to determine whether the themes were sufficiently supported by the data. The accuracy was determined

through the lens of Bandura's (1969) SLT—the theoretical framework of this study. To aid the theme review process, I developed a thematic map (Figure 2) to show the completeness and accuracy of the concepts built from the preliminary themes going to the final themes. Figure 2 shows the incremental levels of learning as learning behavioral support strategies occurred from the guidance of administrators to the retention, practice, and motivation of the novice special education teachers.

Figure 2

Thematic Map



As the themes became apparent, the fifth phase was to finalize and name the themes. Finalizing and naming the themes involved making sure each theme was distinct. I defined the scope of each theme using the codes and coded texts to remain grounded in the data while determining the distinctions of each theme. The final themes and their definitions are provided in Table 4.

Table 4*Final Themes*

Themes	Definitions
Leaders providing learning opportunities for novice teachers	Leaders use their expertise to guide novice teachers and use their resources to refer teachers to proper mentors and training opportunities
Leaders resolving classroom management issues through communication	Leaders being open to discussion of issues and providing feedback to the novice teachers
Leaders providing resources for better classroom management	Leaders strategizing on obtaining resources to help teachers support student learning
Teachers receiving assistance from leaders	Teachers' perception of leadership support through providing resources and solutions to issues
Teachers utilizing plans to remain consistent with students	Teachers' use of the systems and plan recommended by leaders for behavioral support
Teachers listening to leaders' observation and feedback	Teachers' application of leaders' feedback to improve their behavioral support practices
Lack of alignment in teachers' needs and administrators' support	Teachers' perception that the support provided by administrators was not necessarily aligned with their needs

The last phase of the analysis was to recontextualize the themes and report the results. Recontextualizing the themes meant rebuilding the ideas or concepts that emerged from the analysis into a complete narrative that made sense of the participants' experiences. The sixth phase of the analysis entailed a deeper interpretation of the data, which involved a process of selecting a logical manner in which to present the results and choosing appropriate quotes to support the themes. This study was guided by the RQs; thus, the logical way to present the results was through the RQs. The presentation of the results is provided in the next section.

Results

The results are organized according to the RQs. The corresponding themes that answered the RQs are presented under each sub-section. Seven themes emerged: (a) leaders providing learning opportunities for novice teachers, (b) leaders resolving

classroom management issues through communication, (c) leaders providing resources for better classroom management, (d) teachers receiving assistance from leaders, (e) teachers utilizing plans to remain consistent with students, (f) teachers listening to leaders' observation and feedback, and (g) lack of alignment in teachers' needs and administrators' support.

Research Question 1 Themes

RQ1 was, "How do K-12 administrators describe their leadership strategies in supporting novice special education teachers' classroom management?" Three themes emerged to answer RQ1. The themes were: leaders providing learning opportunities for novice teachers, leaders resolving classroom management issues through communication, and leaders providing resources for better classroom management.

Leaders Providing Learning Opportunities for Novice Teachers

The participants generally believed that leaders or administrators had roles in providing learning opportunities for novice special education teachers. According to the participants, learning opportunities entailed both directly guiding novice teachers and referring them to other mentors or professionals when needed. In administrators personally guiding teachers, they typically used their expertise in the duties of overseeing the operations of the school and the performance of their administrative duties. A1 perceived that they were an expert in instructions and guided novice teachers by providing them with instructional leadership. Other participants used their expertise in administration to guide the novice teachers. A5 shared, "I provide leadership, overall direction, and coordination of all activities in and out of the classroom within the school."

Furthermore, as leaders, the administrators personally guided teachers through holding team meetings. A1 stated, “I have my leadership-based team meetings to assist the teachers.”

According to the participants, administrators, as leaders, were also tasked with facilitating changes in the school as well as in resolving issues. As an example, A2 shared facilitating changes to address the learning gap among the student population. A2 stated, “I recognize gaps in the learning environment and facilitate a change.” To facilitate changes and resolve issues, the administrators interviewed in this study generally believed they needed to be decisive and knowledgeable of the education field. A5 expressed:

I am a decisive person. It is important to make good decisions that are effective...Well, if I can understand what is happening by putting myself in their shoes, I will be able to understand fully what is going on. Also, if there is an issue, I can make a quick, informed decision to remedy a situation.

The administrators interviewed in this study shared that they also employed seasoned teachers and other experts to guide novice special education teachers. The participants facilitated peer-to-peer mentoring in which novice teachers were paired with seasoned teachers to learn from. A3 stated, “In my experience, I found that peering teachers together is a good approach when there are pedagogical issues or differences.” External training was also offered to provide novice teachers with additional knowledge about classroom management. A4 shared, “Some additional training. I do not specially provide training, but I offer a few courses that are available.” A2 perceived that training

offered by external providers was helpful in refreshing teachers' knowledge or in addressing teachers' problem areas. A5 stated that after training sessions, they conducted meetings with the teachers to discuss what they learned.

Leaders Resolving Classroom Management Issues Through Communication

The participants found that communicating issues and feedback was an effective leadership strategy to support novice teachers' classroom management. The administrators generally valued the honesty trait in which they were truthful in their evaluation of the teachers' performance and their areas of improvement. A3 shared, "Some conversations can be tough, and I hope in the honesty of evaluation, we can come together with better outcomes." A1 cited the process of "pre-conferencing" to discuss their expectations from the teachers once they engaged in classroom observation, and "post-conferencing" to discuss their feedback on the teachers' classroom management.

The participants also perceived that issues should be openly discussed and resolved by both teachers and administrators. A2 valued being approachable. A2 stated, "I believe that the teachers can come to me with issues that are happening in the classroom as I am approachable. I feel like nothing can get done without a good measure of communication." A3 and A4 had similar perceptions. A3 added that the effects of changes that were made to resolve issues should be openly communicated to appraise their effectiveness in improving classroom management. A3 stated:

I support them by communicating changes as they are implemented. If there seems to be an issue with the new regulations, we sit down and discuss the issue

to see if it is isolated or a consensus of the entire group and find ways to remediate the change.

The administrators interviewed in this study reported the need for consistency in their feedback to the novice teachers. When their expectations especially in content delivery were not met by the teachers, the participants shared that they repeated their guidance. A1 shared, “And so I try to impose upon all of my teachers my mantra around the school is there should be more content than time. More content than time, more content than time.”

Some participants reported that they developed a classroom management system that novice teachers could use to reinforce their practices. The participants communicated the issues and the systems that could resolve the issues. A1 shared, “So that is the way that I’ll go back in and kind of reinforce what the teacher needs and better support them. So I give them a system that they can use.”

Additionally, to communicate the issues to novice teachers, the administrators typically conducted evaluations. Informal and periodic classroom observations as well as formal evaluations were the basis for the evaluations. The administrators also evaluated the training gains as teachers applied in their classroom management strategies. The participants generally communicated their corrections to help novice teachers. A5 stated:

I sit down with the teachers and have a discussion on what they think needs to happen and I explain what we have done in the past. We will then make corrections to the issue based off historical problem solving and come to an agreement that fits.

Leaders Providing Resources for Better Classroom Management

The administrators interviewed in this study generally perceived they were responsible for obtaining and allocating resources that helped novice special education teachers' classroom management strategies. The participants reported that they provided resources that helped students learn in class. A3 stated, "In any given day, I attempt to provide the resources needed to be successful in the classroom." To obtain resources, the participants shared that they met sponsors and the school board. Sponsors typically provided funding for purchasing resources that addressed issues in the classroom. A4 cited, "If the issue is a need for technology, I am going to find the means to help get it funded." The administrators met with the school board to obtain decisions regarding the resources and the classroom management practices. A1 shared, "And then, of course, [I meet] members from our board just to make different decisions."

Apart from material resources, the administrators also sought human resources, particularly specialists, that help with students' learning and behavior. The administrators cited the use of technology resources to help teachers capture the attention of their students. When issues arise from the use of technology, IT specialists were made available to resolve the problems. A2 shared:

Firstly, I have to ensure that it works for the teachers. There are many types of technologies such as Chromebooks and whiteboards. It must be operational. There is a tech person that we have on site to help when in a bind. If the technology does work, we typically have more behavior issues. The students like to stay on task.

Research Question 2 Themes

RQ2 was, “How do novice special education teachers describe the strategies administrators use to support them in the area of classroom management?” The teachers generally perceived that their leaders provided constructive feedback, adequate assistance, and structured systems that helped manage the behaviors of the students. The themes that answered RQ2 were Teachers receiving assistance from leaders, teachers utilizing plans to remain consistent with students, and teachers listening to leaders' observation and feedback.

Teachers Receiving Assistance From Leaders

The teachers shared that the administrators supported their classroom management strategies through their leadership in providing assistance. All five teachers interviewed in this study received assistance with accessing resources that helped with classroom management. The teachers received classroom materials, technology devices, training resources, and specialists. T1 stated, “My principal is constantly asking me what resources do we need? They are really supportive. They helped with the iPads, the Chromebooks., Smartboards, anything.” However, T2 and T3 perceived that apart from assisting with resources, their administrators provided no other support. T3 described their administrator as “not hands-on.” T2 shared that the administrators did not provide guidance on how to maximize the use of the resources.

On the contrary, T1, T4, and T5 perceived that their administrators provided adequate assistance in addressing the issues they raised. For gaps in teaching and classroom management strategies, the administrators provided training and professional

development sessions. The participants added that the administrators also personally assisted them when needed. T4 described:

My principal has assisted greatly. When there is an issue in the classroom, she comes in and assists until the issue is resolved or contained...My principal has helped with the first few weeks of school to help with the computer skills classes to ramp a few students up. It was so needed.

Teachers Utilizing Plans to Remain Consistent With Students

The teachers interviewed in this study stated that the administrators supported their classroom management strategies through laying out plans that enhanced the consistency of their practice. The teachers shared that the plans were their basis for implementing a classroom routine. The teachers perceived that routines were important for special education students to avoid behavioral issues. T5 disclosed:

Each day is planned to incorporate periods of activity to break the monotony so that the student can regain focus. All of this is done within a structured schedule which the students become accustomed to which creates an environment in which they can feel safe.

Part of the plan was to implement a reward system to encourage positive behaviors. T2 explained that the reward system they used was tailored to the individual education plan (IEP) of the students. T2 shared, "The reward system is tied into their IEP. Each particular kid has a different type of behavior restriction and positive behavior reinforcement is used. We also use CHAMPS at our school, which is another reward system." T4 engaged the students' parents to reinforce the behaviors taught in school. T4

shared, “I stay engaged with the parents. I ask them how they are doing at home and also ask about behaviors that have happen on the bus on in the car on the way to school.” In instruction delivery, T3 reported devising weekly lessons plans based on the lessons delivered during the previous week to continue engaging students. T3 shared, “I prepare my lesson plans a week in advance based off of the previous week.”

Teachers Listening to Leaders' Observation and Feedback

The administrators shared that they communicated their feedback to the teachers, and the teachers stated that they listened and applied their leaders' feedback to their classroom management strategies. The teachers generally perceived that their administrators offered different perspectives that were useful in their practice, as the teachers perceived that the administrators were more knowledgeable in the field than they were. T5 stated, “The administrators have given some feedback on making changes in the classroom but, once again, at a high level.” T1 elaborated:

They are always giving me feedback, just some different ways that I can differentiate my instructions for the students' needs. They're giving me different idea, especially in professional development...their stuff is a little bit different. Their data analysis looks different than mine.

T1 corroborated that the principal and vice principal of their school used classroom observations as the basis for their feedback on the teachers' classroom management performance. After the observation, teachers were typically called to meet with the administrators in a one-on-one basis. T2 stated, “We talk one-on-one.”

Research Question 3 Themes

RQ3 was, “What assistance from administrators do novice special education teachers believe they need to improve their classroom management skills?” The administrators’ descriptions of improving classroom management were incongruent with the teachers’ descriptions. Thus, the theme that emerged to answer RQ3 was the lack of alignment in teachers' needs and administrators' support. The theme is described in the following sub-section.

Lack of Alignment in Teachers' Needs and Administrators' Support

The teachers and administrators interviewed in this study had conflicting perceptions about the support needed by novice special education teachers. The administrators generally perceived that novice special education teachers were inexperienced and could not use their time to deliver content. A1 stated, “The second piece was the lack of content. What I've noticed in this day and age that that there is more time than content.” A1 perceived that teachers had low expectations from students with special needs, which was the reason the schoolwork given to the students was limited. The teachers shared that having students with special needs in a mainstream classroom meant that they have students with different learning levels and learning needs; thus, content may not always be delivered as planned. The teachers reported that students with special needs may experience behavioral outbursts that could disrupt the whole class. T3 shared, “The biggest issue is when one student can steer nearly the whole classroom into a frenzy. It is hard to bring them all back and to work there the curriculum for the day.” T3 perceived that the administrators were not trained in special education and could not

understand the differences in the classroom management of special education and general education students. T3 shared, “My administrator seems to be learning with me as they are not Special Education trained. They have learned on the job. I would welcome more help, but not directly from the administrator. Perhaps referrals?”

A5 was the only administrator who acknowledged the possible need to be educated about the management of students with special needs. A5 stated, “I could possibly get some training myself, specifically in special education.” A3 perceived that novice special education teachers’ classroom management strategies could be improved through working together with them to address the shortcomings. A3 stated:

The best way I can improve support is through supporting them, through all the issues and finding effective and innovative processes together. I cannot do it all alone and I do not expect them to figure it all out by themselves. Everything is on a case-by-case basis.

A1 perceived that novice special education teachers did not yet know how to build relationships with their students to help address their learning needs. A1 stated that relationships with students were not built solely in the classroom but also in hallways or anywhere in the school where teachers and students could have conversations. However, T1 and T5 shared that they built relationships with their students inside the classroom through initially establishing rapport then understanding their individual needs. T1 stated:

I’ve definitely built my rapport. What my students I know exactly what they need and what they want, I’m able to differentiate different materials as part of our

routine daily. I'm having different visual schedules there. I want. I need charts that relate to the student. That is specifically what they like to do.

The teachers perceived that their classroom management strategies could improve with further training and peer-to-peer mentoring. T1 shared, "I think it would be pretty nice if I could have someone from special education like another teacher like myself to actually come in and watch more often to give me more feedback." T5 stated that they could continue to work hard to improve themselves. T5 expressed, "Being a new teacher there are days when I feel I have done well and there are days when I feel completely lost. Unfortunately, it seems as if those lost days outnumber those good days. However, I continue to strive to keep improving."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The data collection and data analysis processes were performed with rigor to generate trustworthy results. The evidence of trustworthiness is determined through the components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017; Stahl & King, 2020). The application of trustworthiness techniques in each component is described in the following sub-sections.

Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the data accurately reflects the underlying insights of the participants (Stahl & King, 2020). Credibility was enhanced through obtaining the perspectives of teachers and administrators to cross-validate the data. The data in the form of the transcripts were reviewed and approved by the participants as an accurate representation of their perceptions and experiences. I immersed and engaged in

prolonged exposure to the data and ground the theme development to the data by repeatedly referencing the transcripts. I also used a reflexivity journal to align the generation of themes to the purpose of the study and minimize bias.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the study findings could be applied to another context (Nowell et al., 2017). I provided thick descriptions for the setting and sample of the study so that readers can make their own inferences on how the context influenced the results and how the results could be transferable to another context. This study was conducted while the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing. The participant recruitment and data collection process were completed using online platforms. Novice teachers with 1-2 years of work experience may have had limited experiences with face-to-face classes and have had experiences of teaching online. This study was limited to one school district in Ohio; thus, some strategies may not be practices in other districts or states.

Dependability

Dependability is the extent to which the results remain consistent when the study is replicated (Nowell et al., 2017). I provided a chain of evidence of the development of codes to preliminary themes to themes with supporting excerpts from the data. The thought processes behind the development in each phase of the analysis were documented in a reflexivity journal and described in the data analysis section of this chapter. All of the tools used such as NVivo 12 and the interview protocol were reported. The materials were attached in the appendices.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which the results can be validated by others (Nowell et al., 2017). My role as the researcher was to report the participants' reality through their perceptions and experiences instead of creating a new reality based on the participants' insights (Stahl & King, 2020). I grounded the results to the data as much as possible to reflect the participants' reality. I also used a reflexivity journal to reflect on potential biases that might affect the results.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills in the state of Ohio. Five administrators and five novice special education teachers were interviewed for this study. The interview data were analyzed thematically. The analysis yielded seven themes that answered the three RQs.

The leaders' strategies to support novice special education teachers' classroom management entailed providing learning opportunities, resources, and feedback to the teachers. The leaders conducted formal and informal periodic classroom observation to evaluate the practices of the teachers. Leaders were open to discussing issues that teachers faced. Leaders then communicate their appraisal to the teachers and provide referrals to trainings and peer mentoring if the teachers had areas for improvement in their classroom management. Leaders met with stakeholders to obtain funds and other resources that would help teachers provide better behavioral support for the students and increase their chances of success.

The teachers described their leaders to provide adequate resources for behavioral support as well as assistance with handling students' behavioral issues. The teachers also reported their use of the systems and plans laid out by leaders to create consistency in managing the behavior of the student, as well as applied the feedback provided by the leaders. However, novice teachers also perceived those leaders lacked the understanding of special education. Leaders reported that novice teachers did not maximize their time to deliver content to the students, while the teachers shared that in a mainstream classroom with special education students, unexpected situations and disruptions tended to occur. Students who become disruptive often needed time off or redirection to help them become ready to learn and to prevent them from distracting their peers from learning. The teachers also noted that students tended to learn at different levels, which perpetuated the need for one-on-one, small group, or differentiated instructions that took more time and effort than whole group instructions.

These results will be interpreted in the next chapter. The discussion of the results will be through the lens of Bandura's (1969) SLT and related literature. The implications of the study on theory and practice will also be provided. The limitations, recommendations, and conclusions are also included in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Learning best practices in classroom management is an essential skill for new special education teachers (Cunningham, 2019). The support of school administrators may be key in developing such skills because administrators often have some expertise and are the teachers' immediate superiors within the school (Rodl et al., 2018). However, it remains unclear how administrators can best provide such support to novice special education teachers (Bettini et al., 2018; Hudson et al., 2018; Mrstik et al., 2018). Researchers have called for further research into administrators' support of special education teachers (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020; Hester et al., 2020; Rodl et al., 2018), and novice special education teachers represent a subset of this larger issue.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills in the state of Ohio. Five administrators and five novice special education teachers were interviewed for this study. The data were collected using semistructured one-on-one interviews. The interview data were then analyzed thematically. The analysis yielded seven themes that answered the three RQs.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do K-12 administrators describe their leadership strategies in supporting novice special education teachers' classroom management?

RQ2: How do novice special education teachers describe the strategies administrators use to support them in the area of classroom management?

RQ3: What assistance from administrators do novice special education teachers believe they need to improve their classroom management skills?

Three significant themes emerged that answered RQ1. These themes were leaders providing learning opportunities for novice teachers, leaders resolving classroom management issues through communication, and leaders providing resources for better classroom management. Three significant themes also emerged that answered RQ2. These themes were teachers receiving assistance from leaders, teachers utilizing plans to remain consistent with students, and teachers listening to leaders' observation and feedback. One key theme emerged that answered RQ3: lack of alignment in teachers' needs and administrators' support.

The leaders' strategies to support novice special education teachers' classroom management entailed providing learning opportunities, resources, and feedback to the teachers. The leaders conducted formal and informal periodic classroom observation to evaluate the practices of the teachers. Leaders were open to discussing issues that teachers faced. Leaders then communicated their appraisal to the teachers and provided referrals to trainings and peer mentoring if the teachers had areas for improvement in their classroom management. Leaders met with stakeholders to obtain funds and other resources that would help teachers provide better behavioral support for the students and increase their chances of success. The teachers described their leaders as providing adequate resources for behavioral support as well as assistance with handling students' behavioral issues. The teachers also reported their use of the systems and plans laid out by leaders to create consistency in managing the behavior of the student, as well as

applying the feedback provided by the leaders. However, novice teachers perceived those leaders lacked an understanding of special education. Leaders reported that novice teachers did not maximize their time to deliver content to the students, while the teachers shared that in a mainstream classroom with special education students, unexpected situations and disruptions tended to occur. Students who became disruptive often needed time off or redirection to help them become ready to learn and to prevent them from distracting their peers from learning. The teachers also noted that students tended to learn at different levels, which perpetuated the need for one-on-one, small group, or differentiated instructions that took more time and effort than whole group instruction.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, an interpretation of the findings of this study will be given that will discuss in further depth how these key findings answered the research questions. In the process, these key findings as previously noted will be discussed within the context that they confirm, disconfirm, or extend the related extant literature. These key themes will be analyzed within the context of the existing literature.

Leaders Providing Learning Opportunities for Novice Teachers

The first significant theme that answered RQ1 was leaders providing learning opportunities for novice teachers. The participants generally believed that leaders or administrators had roles in providing learning opportunities for novice special education teachers. According to the participants, learning opportunities entailed both directly guiding novice teachers and referring them to other mentors or professionals when needed. When administrators personally guided teachers, they typically used their

expertise in the duties of overseeing the operations of the school and in the performance of their administrative duties.

Multiple studies in the literature reviewed emphasized the importance of providing learning opportunities for novice special education teachers. Specifically, mentoring was recognized as a concrete way to address the needs of novice special education teachers, especially regarding their instructional practices and skills (Cornelius et al., 2020; Lesh, 2020; Soini et al., 2019; Sweigart & Collins, 2017). Cornelius et al. (2020) further determined in their study that professional development and specialized coaching significantly improved the instructional practices of novice special education teachers (Cornelius et al., 2020). For example, special education teachers learned techniques needed to modify assignments and other coursework to meet the academic needs of each student (Lesh, 2020). Opportunities for teacher development among novice teachers were also recognized in the literature as assisting them with acquiring the knowledge and skills to work effectively and cope with the stressful factors of their job (binti Mosbiran et al., 2020; Minghui et al., 2018). Other studies more generally recognized administrative support as a significant factor that increased the retention of special education teachers (Lovett et al., 2018; Plantiveau et al., 2018). Therefore, the first key finding of this study of leaders providing learning opportunities for novice special education teachers confirmed consensus in the existing literature of the importance of providing these opportunities.

The conceptual framework of this study was Bandura's (1969) SLT. The principal observation of SLT is that the cognitive procedures of learning happens within a social

context (Bandura, 1969). Under SLT, learning is understood through four incremental levels of learning: “observation (environmental), retention (cognitive), reproduction (cognitive), and motivation” (Bandura & Hall, 2018, p. 20). In the observation stage, the learner merely observes or studies the material. In the retention stage, the content of the observational learning is retained, and learning can progress (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Once the content has been learned and retained, then the learner may begin to demonstrate mastery of it through reproduction. Through all these steps, motivation is the guiding thread, and likely the factor that drives observation to become retention and retention to become reproduction (Bandura & Hall, 2018).

This theory was applied to the current study within the context of probing the level of administrative support for novice special education teachers in classroom management through providing learning opportunities, resources, and feedback to the teachers. Ideally, administrators should provide novice teachers with motivation, which is the key to learning (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Conversely, novice teachers should be learning from administrators and other more experienced professionals at the cognitive levels of observation, retention, and reproduction. The first stage of this conceptual framework is that of observation that implies opportunities for novice teachers to continue to learn from more experienced teachers such as peer mentors, other professionals, and the administrators themselves. Therefore, this first key finding of leaders providing learning opportunities for novice teachers supports the tenets of this conceptual framework.

Leaders Resolving Classroom Management Issues Through Communication

The second significant theme that answered RQ1 was leaders resolving classroom management issues through communication. The participants found that communicating issues and receiving feedback was an effective leadership strategy to support novice teachers' classroom management. The administrators generally valued the honesty trait in which they were truthful in their evaluation of the teachers' performance and their areas of improvement. The participants also perceived that issues should be openly discussed and resolved by both teachers and administrators.

Although research was more limited in the literature on the specific topic of collaboration between administrators and special education teachers, Cunningham (2019) examined this topic further in a qualitative case study wherein the researcher aimed to identify significant supports needed to increase the retention rates of special education teachers. Examining the perspectives of 15 special education teachers, Cunningham conducted semi-structured interviews and found that the most significant support factors for special education teachers were social support from colleagues and meaningful assistance from administrators. This meaningful assistance from administrators included availability of peer mentors and work performance feedback (Cunningham, 2019). These findings added support to previous consensus in the literature on the importance of peer mentoring for novice special education teachers (Cornelius et al., 2020; Lesh, 2020; Soini et al., 2019; Sweigart & Collins, 2017). Cunningham also added further consensus that administrative support was a significant factor that increased the retention of special education teachers (Lovett et al., 2018; Plantiveau et al., 2018). Glowacki and Hackmann

(2016) noted that principals and administrators providing feedback to special education teachers was more crucial to their professional development and job performance improvement than impersonal evaluation systems. Therefore, this second key finding of leaders resolving classroom management issues through communication generally confirmed research in the literature. However, research was limited on this topic, inviting further research that focuses on communication between administrative leaders and novice special education teachers, particularly as it pertains to classroom management and work performance feedback.

Regarding the conceptual framework, the first stage of this framework of observation when the learner merely observes or studies the material also implies opportunities for novice teachers to continue to learn from the administrative leaders themselves through more in-depth communication and feedback. Therefore, this second key finding of leaders resolving classroom management issues through communication further supports the tenets of this conceptual framework. Effectively resolving classroom management issues may also imply support for the second stage of retention from this framework, of these special education teachers now effectively retaining what they have learned from these administrators and applying it in the classroom.

Leaders Providing Resources for Better Classroom Management

The third significant theme that answered RQ1 was leaders providing resources for better classroom management. The administrators interviewed in this study generally perceived they were responsible for obtaining and allocating resources that helped novice special education teachers' classroom management strategies. The participants reported

that they provided resources that helped students learn in class. Apart from material resources, the administrators also sought human resources that helped with students' learning and behavior. The administrators cited the use of technology resources as well to help teachers capture the attention of their students.

No studies were noted in the literature reviewed that specifically focused research on material and technology resources being provided by administrators to novice special education teachers to help support them. However, providing human resources was recognized in the literature as previously noted of peer mentoring (Cornelius et al., 2020; Cunningham, 2019; Lesh, 2020; Soini et al., 2019; Sweigart & Collins, 2017), professional development (binti Mosbiran et al., 2020; Minghui et al., 2018), and administrative support (Cunningham, 2019; Glowacki & Hackmann, 2016; Lovett et al., 2018; Plantiveau et al., 2018). Therefore, this third key finding both supports and extends the existing literature on the importance of administrators also providing material and technology resources to help support novice special education teachers.

Regarding the conceptual framework, providing human resources continues to imply both the opportunity for observation when the learner merely observes or studies the material and retention when the content of the observational learning is retained, and learning can progress among these novice special education teachers from the support of these administrators. Providing additional material and technology resources further implies the stage of motivation, likely the factor that drives observation to become retention and retention to become reproduction, for novice special education teachers to be more effective as well from administrative leaders. Therefore, this third key finding of

leaders providing resources for better classroom management also supports this conceptual framework.

Teachers Receiving Assistance From Leaders

The first significant theme that answered RQ2 was teachers receiving assistance from leaders. The teachers shared that the administrators supported their classroom management strategies through their leadership in providing assistance. All five teachers interviewed in this study received assistance with accessing resources that helped with classroom management. The teachers received classroom materials, technology devices, training resources, and specialists.

Other studies in the literature reviewed focused research on special education teachers receiving assistance from administrative leaders. In a phenomenological study, Bennedum (2020) found that administrative support and assistance was crucial for teachers to effectively manage job demands in the classroom. Hester et al. (2020) further concurred that school leaders and administrators would do well to use job resources to effectively provide support for novice special education teachers, decreasing overall burnout and attrition in special education settings. Both Bennedum and Hester et al. added to the previous consensus in the literature of the importance of administrative support (Cunningham, 2019; Glowacki & Hackmann, 2016; Lovett et al., 2018; Plantiveau et al., 2018). Therefore, this fourth key finding of teachers receiving assistance from leaders continues to confirm consensus in the literature on this topic.

Regarding the conceptual framework, providing leadership assistance also continues to imply both the opportunity for observation and retention of what has been

learned among these novice special education teachers in developing classroom management. Providing additional material and technology resources further implies the stage of motivation as well for novice special education teachers in their classroom management. Therefore, this fourth key finding of teachers receiving assistance from leaders also supports this conceptual framework.

Teachers Utilizing Plans to Remain Consistent With Students

The second significant theme that answered RQ2 was teachers utilizing plans to remain consistent with students. The teachers interviewed in this study stated that the administrators supported their classroom management strategies through laying out plans that enhanced the consistency of their practice. The teachers shared that the plans were their basis for implementing a classroom routine. The teachers perceived that routines were important for special education students to avoid behavioral issues.

Studies in the literature also focused research on the importance of planning in the effective management of special education classrooms. Yildiz (2017) found that classroom management could lead to improved student outcomes in special education settings, and teachers who used classroom management strategies were less likely to report problematic classroom behaviors and more likely to report student success. Reinke et al. (2018) added support by finding that improvements in classroom management resulted in decreased student emotional dysregulation and increased prosocial behaviors among students (Reinke et al., 2018). However, neither of these studies emphasized the specific role of administrators in the planning and classroom management of novice special education teachers. Therefore, this fifth key finding of teachers utilizing plans to

remain consistent with students both confirms and extends the existing literature, while also inviting further research on this topic.

Regarding the conceptual framework, providing leadership assistance from these administrators to support the classroom management strategies of these novice special education teachers through laying out plans that enhanced the consistency of their practice continues to imply both the opportunity for observation and retention as well of what has been learned among these novice special education teachers in their classroom management. Therefore, the fifth key finding of teachers utilizing plans to remain consistent with students continues to support this conceptual framework. However, the stage of demonstrating mastery of what has been learned through reproduction does not appear to be applicable for the current study because the participants are all novice special education teachers, inviting further research and the possibility of a future longitudinal study to better assess whether mastery of what has been learned through reproduction is also occurring.

Teachers Listening to Leaders' Observation and Feedback

The third significant theme that answered RQ2 was teachers listening to leaders' observation and feedback. The administrators shared that they communicated their feedback to the teachers, and the teachers stated that they listened and applied their leaders' feedback to their classroom management strategies. The teachers generally perceived that their administrators offered different perspectives that were useful in their practice, as the teachers perceived that the administrators were more knowledgeable in the field than they were.

The literature reviewed also explored the usefulness of specific feedback from administrators among special education teachers. As previously noted, Cunningham (2019) conducted semistructured interviews and found that the most significant support factors for special education teachers were social support from colleagues and meaningful assistance from administrators that specifically included work performance feedback. Glowacki and Hackmann (2016) further noted that feedback to special education teachers from principals and administrators was more crucial to their professional development and job performance improvement than impersonal evaluation systems.

However, other researchers in the literature challenged the idea that administrators were always more knowledgeable in the field than special education teachers. Consensus was found that administrators needed to be trained in evaluating special education teachers, especially administrators without any prior background in special education, that could help ensure effective job performance among special education teachers, and specifically with classroom management (Aramburo & Rodl, 2020; Khasawneh, 2020; Lawson & Knollman, 2017; Rodl et al., 2018). Consensus was also found that this additional training for administrators was necessary because there were significant differences between the evaluation and feedback of general and special education teachers, especially in terms of instructional content and classroom management skills (Lawson & Knollman, 2017; Rodl et al., 2018; Specht & Metsala, 2018). Therefore, this sixth key finding of teachers' listening to leaders' observation and feedback both confirms and disconfirms the existing literature on the point of

administrators being more knowledgeable in the field than special education teachers were. More research is indicated though to better understand this dynamic among administrators and special education teachers of how often administrators themselves do need to be further trained to provide helpful feedback and effective leadership for these teachers.

Regarding the conceptual framework, listening to the observation and feedback from these leaders continues to imply both the opportunity for observation when the learner merely observes or studies the material and retention when the content of the observational learning is retained, and learning can progress among these novice special education teachers. And, at least for the teacher participants in this study, they did perceive that these administrators were more knowledgeable in the field than they were. Therefore, this sixth key finding of teachers' listening to leaders' observation and feedback continues to support this conceptual framework.

Lack of Alignment in Teachers' Needs and Administrators' Support

The significant theme that answered RQ3 was lack of alignment in teachers' needs and administrators' support. The teachers and administrators interviewed in this study had conflicting perceptions about the support needed by novice special education teachers. The administrators generally perceived that novice special education teachers were inexperienced and could not use their time to deliver content. The teachers shared that having students with special needs in a mainstream classroom meant that they have students with different learning levels and learning needs; thus, content may not always

be delivered as planned. The teachers further reported that students with special needs may experience behavioral outbursts that could disrupt the whole class.

Multiple studies in the literature explored the additional administrative support needs and oppositions that special education teachers may have with classroom management. However, none of these studies were from the perspective of administrative leaders. Cunningham (2019) also found in the study that was previously noted that meaningful assistance from administrators included more time for tasks to be completed and support from administrators about behavioral issues. Shewark et al. (2018) determined that creating an inclusive and positive classroom environment could produce stress for special education teachers if behavioral challenges arose with students. Taylor et al. (2019) and Antoniou et al. (2020) concurred that challenges with behavior management in special education classrooms created negative feelings of frustration and disappointment among these teachers. Haydon et al. (2018) further concurred that the behavioral management of special needs students could create increased stress for special education teachers and induce feelings of anger, anxiety, frustration, and tension among these teachers.

Therefore, the last key finding of this study generally confirms consensus in the literature from the perspective of special education teachers of the additional needs and challenges they have with classroom management. This key finding also extends the existing literature by spotlighting the disconnect that may still exist between how administrative leaders perceive classroom management challenges for novice special education teachers and how they perceive these challenges from the lack of alignment of

teachers' needs and administrators' support. Further research is clearly indicated again though to better understand this dynamic among administrators and special education teachers of how often administrators themselves do need to be further trained to provide helpful feedback and effective leadership for these teachers and how this dynamic may be a significant factor that causes a lack of alignment that may include more studies that are specifically from the perspective of administrative leaders.

The conceptual framework for the current study is still supported, despite the lack of alignment of teachers' needs and administrative support, yet the basic assumption is now challenged of who needs to be learning, observing, and retaining more. Further studies may focus on whether novice special education teachers as initially presumed or is it the administrative leader need the continued training. Therefore, this last key finding helps to provide valuable insight for SLT as well of the importance of determining who is actually learning through the stages of observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation, who is not, who needs to be learning more, and whether this is a linear or a collaborative process of learning where both are students and both are teachers.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations included generalizability and/or trustworthiness, validity, and reliability from executing the present study. The study was limited in terms of its generalizability because of the focus on one specific school district in the state of Ohio, with a relatively small sample size of only ten participants. In addition, this study was performed for the duration of COVID-19, which may have interrupted and influenced the recruitment of the study sample and availability of more participants for sample selection.

However, this limitation was addressed by acknowledging the appropriate scope when reporting the findings of the study.

Regarding trustworthiness, there were no recognized limitations. The data collection and data analysis processes were performed with rigor to generate trustworthy results through the components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017; Stahl & King, 2020). Credibility was enhanced through obtaining the perspectives of teachers and administrators to cross-validate the data. The data in the form of the transcripts were reviewed and approved by the participants as an accurate representation of their perceptions and experiences. The researcher provided thick descriptions for the setting and sample of the study so that readers could make their own inferences on how the context influenced the results and how the results could be transferable to another context. Dependability was enhanced by the researcher providing a chain of evidence of the development of codes to preliminary themes to themes with supporting excerpts from the data. All of the tools used such as NVivo 12 and the interview protocol were reported, and the materials were attached in the appendices. The researcher enhanced confirmability by reporting the participants' reality through their perceptions and experiences instead of creating a new reality based on the participants' insights. The researcher then grounded the results to the data as much as possible to reflect the participants' reality.

Regarding validity, as previously noted, the data collection and data analysis processes of the study were performed with rigor. However, one limitation may be that the requirement to use Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic could have yielded fewer

specific data collection than an in-person interview. There were also some limitations to reliability that were recognized as biases, such as the bias of the researcher who had a background in education.

However, the research took steps to minimize this bias through careful self-reflection and the borrowing of the bracketing approach from phenomenology, as well as utilizing a reflexivity journal to reflect on potential biases that might affect the results. The participants' own social desirability biases might have also limited the results, in that they could have felt the urge to present themselves in a socially acceptable light rather than a wholly truthful one. This bias was minimized by ensuring the participants that their responses were confidential. Another related factor was that the researcher was known in the school district under study, which may have increased social desirability bias. However, the researcher minimized this bias by ensuring wherever possible that interactions occurred with participants who did not already know the researcher.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further research within the context of the strengths and limitations of the current study and the literature reviewed will now be discussed. This current study offered many strengths of a specific focus on K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. However, several limitations to this study were noted that invite further research. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies on this topic include other novice special educators and administrators from other school districts within the state of Ohio and in other states as well to enhance generalizability. It is also recommended that further studies be conducted

that are not within a pandemic context or necessitate the use of only online platforms to allow for in-person interviews. Moreover, it is also recommended that additional studies should occur to reduce the potential for social desirability bias. Further research could use different types of research designs and methodologies that are quantitative and measure specific variables of classroom management skills among novice special educators, or more specifically measure the types of evaluations and feedback that administrators provide to novice special educators, or more specifically measure if and what type of special education classroom management skills administrators have, or use a mixed method approach that does not completely rely on self-report data. Longitudinal studies could follow novice special education teachers as well to better determine how effective administrative support was in helping these teachers to develop and demonstrate mastery in their classroom management skills.

Several areas for further research were also recognized from the existing literature reviewed. Research was limited to the topic of communication between administrative leaders and novice special education teachers, particularly as it pertained to classroom management and work performance feedback. Therefore, further research is recommended in this area. No studies were noted in the literature reviewed that specifically focused research on material and technology resources being provided by administrators to novice special education teachers to help support them. Therefore, this topic is also recommended for further research. Although the importance of planning and the effective management of special education classrooms was recognized in the literature, these studies did not emphasize the specific role of administrators in this

process. Therefore, further research is recommended on this topic as well. Further research is also indicated and recommended pertaining to discrepancies in the literature regarding the dynamic among administrators and special education teachers of how often administrators themselves need to be further trained to provide helpful feedback and effective leadership for these teachers, and how this dynamic may be a significant factor that causes a lack of alignment between the needs of special education teachers and the administrative support they receive.

Implications

Implications of this study and its potential impact for positive social change on the individual, family, organizational, and societal/policy level will now be discussed. Next, methodological and theoretical implications will be discussed. Then, recommendations for practice will also be discussed.

On the individual level, providing deeper insight into why administrators' efforts do and do not help novice special education teachers better develop their classroom management skills could lead to improved communication and support from these administrators. In turn, this improved communication and support from administrators may bolster the mental health of novice special education teachers and improve their teaching ability. This improved teaching ability could then provide benefits to the students with special needs they teach and the families of these students. Positive social change could also occur at both the organizational and society/policy level as this enhanced communication and support from administrators for novice special education teachers becomes more informed and focused professional training and development of

best practices that are duplicated and then positively impact society at the policy level from these the improvements in the K-12 special education system.

Regarding methodological implications, there is a need for future studies as previously noted that will explore the research topic of this study with an expanded sample of administrators and novice special education teachers to enhance generalizability and reduce social desirability bias, and with different types of research designs and methodologies to further enhance validity and reliability. Regarding the theoretical implications, this study makes a valuable contribution to Bandura's (1969) SLT as it pertains to the interaction and learning process between administrators and novice special education teachers. The last key finding from the study of lack of alignment in teachers' needs and administrators' support helps to provide valuable insight for SLT as well of the importance of determining who is actually learning through the stages of observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation, who is not, who needs to be learning more, and whether this is a linear or a collaborative process of learning where both are students and both are teachers.

Recommendations for practice in education from the findings of this study point to the potential need for both administrative leaders and novice special education teachers to receive more professional development and training in special education classroom management. Providing this professional development and training for administrators could improve their ability to support novice special education teachers more effectively. These administrators may also improve specifically in their ability to set realistic

expectations when offering work performance feedback for novice special education teachers and assisting them with developing plans for classroom management.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management skills. Key findings from this study indicated that these administrative leaders did support these novice special education teachers by providing learning opportunities, resolving classroom management issues through communication, and providing resources for better classroom management. These teachers also confirmed that they received assistance from these leaders, used plans to remain consistent with students, and listened to observation and feedback from these leaders. However, there was still a lack of alignment between the needs of these teachers and the support they received from these administrators. It is imperative that any lack of alignment in communication and perception of best practices for special education classroom management be more effectively resolved between administrative leaders and novice special education teachers that may include removing the presumption that administrative leaders are more knowledgeable in the field than special education teachers if these leaders have no professional background or training in special education. For, if novice special education teachers are not adequately supported by administrative leaders, their struggles with classroom management will negatively impact the learning and growth of students and could cause them to leave the special education teaching profession all together.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide (Novice Teachers)

Demographic questions:

How many years have you been teaching?

What special education classes do you teach?

What grade level(s) do you teach?

Opening question: Please describe how you typically manage your classroom.

Planned probing question 1: How did you prepare for classroom management?

Planned probing question 2: What do you think is your level of preparedness for classroom management?

Planned probing question 3: Please describe your level of mastery of classroom management.

RQ2 interview questions:

1. What challenges or stressful experiences have you faced in relation to classroom management?

Planned probing question 1: What challenges related to the use of technology in the classroom have you experienced?

Planned probing question 2: What pedagogical challenges have you experienced?

Planned probing question 3: How did changes in regulations affect you?

2. What do you think about the support currently provided by the school principal or administrator to help you with your classroom management skills?

Planned probing question 1: How did your administrators support you in using technology in the classroom?

Planned probing question 2: What did your administrators do to support your pedagogy?

Planned probing question 3: How did your administrators support you through regulatory changes in the educational system?

3. What classroom issues have the school administrators addressed?

Planned probing question 1: What did the administrators do to prepare you for classroom management?

Planned probing question 2: What training(s) did the administrators provide to improve your classroom management skills?

4. How did the administrators address those issues?

RQ3 interview questions:

1. What do you think your administrators can do to support a novice special education teacher like you in terms of improving classroom management skills?

Closing question: Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix B: Interview Guide (Administrators)

Demographic questions:

What is your job title?

How long have you been an administrator?

How many special education teachers do you currently work with?

Opening question: In general, what do you do to be supportive to your teachers?

RQ1 interview questions:

1. What are your roles as an administrator?
2. How does your role as a leader let you support novice special education teachers' classroom management?
3. What traits define you as an administrator?
4. How do your traits as an administrator support novice special education teachers' classroom management?
5. What do you perceive as the issues in the classrooms of novice special education teachers?
6. How do you address those issues faced by novice special education teachers?

Planned probing question 1: How do you address issues with the use of technology in the classroom?

Planned probing question 2: How do you address pedagogical issues?

Planned probing question 3: How do you support novice special education teachers while implementing changes in regulations?

Planned probing question 4: What do you do to prepare novice special education teachers for classroom management?

Planned probing question 5: What training(s) do you provide to novice special education teachers to improve their classroom management skills?

RQ3 interview question:

1. How do you think you can improve the administrators' support for novice special education teachers' classroom management?

Closing question: Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix C: Recruitment E-mails

Recruitment Email for Novice Special Education Teachers

My name is Rhonda Abramson, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a research study to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers.

I am recruiting individuals who meet all of these criteria:

1. Are special education teachers
2. Are special education teachers in the (insert school district here) school district of Ohio
3. Have been special education teachers for less than 5 years

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Participate in an individual online interview that will be audio recorded. (60 minutes)
2. Check the transcript of your interview which will be sent to you through email. (20 minutes)

During these activities, you will be asked questions about your experiences as a novice special education teacher.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at [list contact information].

Thank you!

Rhonda Abramson

Recruitment Email for Administrators

My name is Rhonda Abramson, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a research study to examine K-12 administrators' support for novice special education teachers.

I am recruiting individuals who meet all of these criteria:

1. Are school administrators

2. Are school administrators in the (insert school district here) school district of Ohio
3. Have current or former experience supporting novice special education teachers
4. Have at least 1 year of experience supporting novice special education teachers

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Participate in an individual online interview that will be audio recorded. (60 minutes)
2. Check the transcript of your interview which will be sent to you through email. (20 minutes)

During these activities, you will be asked questions about your experiences as an administrator providing support to novice special education teachers.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at [list contact information].

Thank you!

Rhonda Abramson

Appendix D: List of Codes and Themes

Codes	Preliminary themes	Themes
		Leaders providing learning opportunities for novice teachers
	Referrals to training and mentoring	
classroom management training for new hires		
facilitating peer-to-peer mentoring		
referrals to training		
	Using expertise to guide novice teachers	
assist in resolving issues		
decisive		
knowledgeable trait		
facilitate change where needed		
holding team meetings		
instructional leadership		
overseeing		
admin duties		
operations		
provide guidance		
student discipline		
		Leaders resolving classroom management issues through communication
	Being open to discussions	
approachable trait		
communicate changes		
honesty trait		
discuss evaluations		
open to communicate and listen to issues		
post-conferencing about areas of improvement		

Codes	Preliminary themes	Themes
pre-conferencing about lessons		
building morale for motivation	Providing consistent feedback	
consistency trait		
genuine trait, get the job done		
integrity trait		
daily attention		
emphasis on the lesson plan		
going over classroom management strategies		
offer corrections		
reinforcing a classroom management system		
repeating the importance of content delivery		
teacher evaluation		
evaluation of training gains		
periodic evaluation		
state-based evaluation		
		Leaders providing resources for better classroom management
	Obtaining resources for student learning	
having specialized technical support		
meet school board		
meet sponsors		
provide resources for student success		
		Teachers receiving assistance from leaders
	Receiving assistance	
leaders giving breaks		
leaders providing assistance with issues		

Codes	Preliminary themes	Themes
leaders providing professional development peer mentoring leaders providing resources access to specialist -no other support training resources		Teachers utilizing plans to remain consistent with students
	Utilizing plans	
doing one's best engaging with parents implementing a reward system lesson planning setting a classroom routine		Teachers listening to leaders' observation and feedback
	Listening to feedback	
classroom observation one-on-one providing different perspectives		Lack of alignment in teachers' needs and administrators' support
	admin's lack of understanding of special education	
-administrators' problems with novice teachers acknowledged lack of understanding do not maximize time for content delivery admin feedback not applicable admin not SPED trained issues in classroom management		

Codes	Preliminary themes	Themes
adjusting from remote setting to face-to-face		
behavioral problems taking time away from instruction delivery		
dealing with unexpected events		
different levels of development		
students need small group or one-on-one attention		
don't know how to build relationships		
Building a relationship with students		
knowing the students		
understanding and addressing individual student needs		
mastered building rapport		
issues with parents		
not cooperating		
lack of control in the classroom		
feel the need for change		
need for better problem solving		
too much focus on IEPs		
need more learning opportunities		
desire for peer-to-peer mentoring		
need for more training		
still learning		
need more collaboration with teachers		
	lack of support for classroom management	
issues in using technology		
problems with equipment		
students do not know how to use gadgets		
don't know how to be safe		
too young to understand functions		
understaffed		