

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Education Dissertations and Projects

School of Education

2019

A Program Evaluation of the Degree Program for Students with Behavioral Difficulties

Gail Whisnant

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/education_etd



Part of the [Educational Methods Commons](#)

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE DEGREE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS
WITH BEHAVIORAL DIFFICULTIES

By
Gail Whisnant

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner Webb University
2019

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Gail Whisnant under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Stephen Laws, Ed.D.
Committee Chair

Date

Cheryl Lutz, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date

Anita Ware, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date

Prince Bull, Ph.D.
Dean of the School of Education

Date

Abstract

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE DEGREE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL DIFFICULTIES. Whisnant, Gail D., 2019: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

This study used a qualitative approach to explore a rural school district's DEGREE program through parent and staff member perspectives using Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model of program evaluation. Interviews and questionnaire data provided information to answer the following research questions:

1. Context: What is the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?
2. Input: What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught?
3. Process: How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?
4. Product: What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?

Qualitative methods such as questionnaires and interviews involving the director of exceptional children, current school staff members, and parent stakeholders were used to collect data, allowing the researcher to analyze perspectives of the DEGREE program. Data from questionnaires are displayed in chart form in Chapter 4. Interview data were coded for common themes that surfaced in responses. Data from the interviews are displayed in narrative form in Chapter 4. Academic data were analyzed to include testing data and academic progress using EVAAS. Based on data from the DEGREE staff member questionnaires and interview groups, teacher respondents provided varying

responses with regard to the overall effectiveness of the DEGREE program. Parent responses from questionnaires and interviews showed the DEGREE program had an overall benefit to their student. Academic data showed that students regressed academically, but DEGREE allowed students the opportunity to graduate and improve post-secondary outcomes.

Keywords: homebound, emotional disorders, academic growth

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study	11
Research Questions	15
Significance of the Study	15
Overview of Methodology	16
Definition of Terms.....	18
Outline of the Study	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review	21
Identification/Prevention of EBD	21
Behavioral Intervention	28
Academic Intervention.....	42
Appropriate School Setting/Teacher Traits/Qualifications.....	46
Chapter 3: Methodology	52
Research Design.....	53
Participants.....	55
Context.....	55
Input	56
Process	56
Product	57
Interviews.....	58
Display of Data	60
Analysis of Data.....	61
Summary of Methodology	62
Chapter 4: Results and Findings	63
Context.....	63
Input	66
Process	74
Product	80
Summary	83
Chapter 5: Discussion	85
Summary of Results	86
Discussion of Findings.....	90
Implications for Practice	92
Recommendation 1–Early Screener and Universal Preventions	92
Recommendation 2–Learning and Academic Supports.....	94
Recommendation 3–Increased Communication	95
Recommendation 4–Ongoing Program Evaluation	96
Recommendations for Future Research	97
Limitations	98
Delimitations	98
Summary	99
References.....	100

Appendices

A	Interview Questions – Director of Special Education.....	111
B	Staff Survey	113
C	Teacher Interview Questions	117
D	Parent Survey	119
E	Parent Interview Questions	122

Figures

1	Student Self-Management Interventions.....	33
2	Teaching Interventions for Students with Emotional or Behavior Disorders.....	34
3	Overview of CIPP Methods.....	54
4	Middle School ELA Projected versus Actual Percentile	77
5	English II Projected versus Actual Percentiles	78
6	Biology Projected versus Actual Percentiles	79

Chapter 1: Introduction

In school systems across the state of North Carolina, many students struggle with behavioral problems that impose significant disruptions to the school day. Juvenile crime statistics indicate that in 1991, 17% of all serious violent crimes were committed by juveniles (United States Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017). Juvenile arrests for weapons violations more than doubled between 1983 and 1992. In 1993, the North Carolina General Assembly believed it necessary to pass the Safe Schools Act to report violent crimes and offenses. Principals are torn between the idea of students missing valuable instructional hours and supporting teachers by imposing disciplinary measures that are aligned with behaviors. Principals must choose between allowing a student to stay in a least restrictive environment and taking precautions to protect the student body from a few aggressive students (Rose & Espelage, 2012). A study by LaSalle, George, McCoach, Polk, and Evanovich (2018) used information provided by the U.S. Department of Education to determine that reducing the opportunity gap between subgroups of students while simultaneously creating safe and positive school climates that lessen the likelihood of peer victimization and promote mental health is of utmost importance. Schools are expected to create positive school climates that increase social well-being and academic performance of all students, preparing them to be successful adults. Many schools struggle to provide these environments for all students, as evidenced by higher suspension rates, exclusions, and academic failures among students in minority groups and those students with disabilities (LaSalle et al., 2018).

The number of students who are served by the exceptional children's department for emotional disturbances is actually quite low. According to the U.S. Department of

Education (2019), students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBDs) rose from 283,000 in 1976-1977 to a high of 489,000 in 2004-2005. Most recent statistics indicated a decline in the number of students who fall into this category to 354,000 in 2013-2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019); however, this continues to be a small percentage of the total school population, contributing to only 1%. Even though children who experience behavioral and emotional difficulties comprise such a small population of the school, these students continuously overwhelm school staff. Principals and teachers spend a tremendous amount of their time dealing with students whose behaviors are interrupting the learning of others. In North Carolina, the determination worksheet categorizes serious emotional disturbance (SED) impairments in at least one of six areas: (a) an inability to make educational progress that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems; or (f) a diagnosis of schizophrenia. The impairment also has to be accompanied with documentation that the condition has been exhibited over a long period of time and to a marked degree. None of these descriptors give exact criterion to determine how long the condition has existed or what quantifies a marked degree. This ambiguity in language may hinder the team's ability to objectively decide what is required to determine a child's eligibility (Gresham, 2005). This could lead to under diagnosis of students, which may impede the school's ability to properly place students with the appropriate attentions, treatments, and supports.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study Wave 2 (Wagner & Davis, 2006)

found the following for youth with emotional disturbance:

- Students with emotional disturbance reported higher use of alcohol (54%), illegal drugs (36%), marijuana use (44%), and smoking (53%) than all other disability categories.
- Youth with emotional disturbances had the highest dropout rate of any disability categories, with 44% leaving school without finishing.
- Youth with emotional disturbance were the largest group to no longer live with parents (35%) and were the only group to show a significant increase in the likelihood of living in other arrangements, including criminal justice or mental health facilities, under legal guardianship, in foster care, or being homeless.
- Youth in this category had experienced the largest increase in their rate of parenting, with 11% reporting they had or fathered a child.
- One third of these youth had not found a way to become engaged in their community since leaving high school; for those who had, employment was the usual mode of engagement.
- Approximately one in five in youth with emotional disturbances enrolled in any kind of postsecondary education.
- More than three-fourths had been stopped by police other than for a traffic violation, 58% had been arrested at least once, and 43% had been on probation or parole.

Students who are categorized as having an emotional disturbance have a much

lower likelihood of experiencing a satisfied life. They are much less likely to continue education and have a harder time adjusting to the expectations of society and their peers. These students continue to struggle with the academic and social demands of school because of the time they are removed from the classroom. Students with disabilities represent 12% of the total enrollment of schools but make up 67% of all restraints and are more than twice as likely to be suspended from school. Students who are categorized as having EBDs have the highest risk for negative school outcomes of any disability (LaSalle et al., 2018). Missed instructional time prevents students from gaining academic growth, which further complicates the stressors they experience and increases the “acting out” behaviors (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017). These students are also the most likely to drop out of school and have higher retention rates, lower graduation rates, and higher rates of suspensions (Suh & Suh, 2007). They have a high risk of peer rejection, negative teacher interaction, and isolation from their community (LaSalle et al., 2018).

These behavioral difficulties do not end after high school but carry over into adulthood. In short, students who are categorized as SED/EBD can have difficulty making and maintaining positive social interactions because of their inability to properly regulate and maintain emotions, which makes them miss out on the needed relational factors to help them become well-adjusted adults (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017). In a review of longitudinal studies regarding students with SED/EBD, Bradley, Doolittle, and Bartolotta (2008) noted that there has been little improvement in academic achievement, social interactions, and long-term adult outcomes. The studies followed students with disabilities as they moved from elementary to middle school, then from high school to early adulthood. One of the studies, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, was a

10-year follow-up comparison study which revealed improved results for students with disabilities as a whole on almost all variables, with the exception of students with EBD (Bradley et al., 2008). These students showed little to no improvement. They continued to have the worst academic and behavioral outcomes of any disability group. After over 2 decades of research and interventions, school systems are still failing to adequately prepare these students for postsecondary life.

Statement of the Problem

Educating students with special needs has been a critical issue for many years with both policy makers and educators. When dealing with students who have emotional or behavioral disorders, these needs require extensive interventions by classroom teachers and other professionals. An estimated 10-13% of school-age students have some type of emotional or behavioral disorder (Buchanan, Nese, & Clark, 2016). School personnel are not equipped to deal with the issues presented by students with EBD, partly due to a lack of knowledge and resources and partially due to staffing and budget issues. Many schools share part-time behavior interventionists, and time is not adequately provided to ensure desired results. Sometimes, the difficulty in treating mental health involves finding out the correct disorder to treat. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, or DSM, is the method used to analyze issues and create diagnoses. The DSM was revised in 2013 and will continue to be updated more frequently as more research into mental disorders is conducted. The DSM-5 included the addition of post-traumatic stress disorder as part of emotional disorders, which has major implications for students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, or ACES (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017). These additions to the DSM-5 reveal

the multiple delineations of emotional disorders and stress the need to develop specific, research-based interventions to assist students with EBD to become productive citizens. The early identification of students with EBD helps increase the likelihood of getting students appropriate help as needed. Early behavioral patterns have the best results for interventions. If these behavior patterns are not corrected early on, behavioral problems begin to increase in intensity and severity (Bradley et al., 2008).

Students with EBD present challenges in the classroom as well. They typically display disruptive, externalizing behaviors such as aggression and noncompliance. These challenging behaviors may prevent them from learning as fast or as well as their peers. Students with EBD have been found to adjust poorly to classroom environments and have low achievement scores (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017). Unfortunately, students with EBD are usually aware of their academic underperformance, which may contribute to their behavioral problems. In particular, reading failure is often associated with poor motivation, frustration, failure to comply with directions, or aggressive behavior to avoid completing assignments. These behaviors require teacher attention and often disrupt other learners. To further compound the problem, students at risk of EBD cannot receive services from the special education department under the EBD category until they demonstrate low academic performance (Ciullo, Ortiz, Al Otaiba, & Lane, 2016).

In today's society, schools are increasingly being asked to provide mental health support and behavior modification to more and more students; however, there is a serious shortage of teachers who are trained and qualified to teach students with EBD. These students are more likely to receive a large portion of their services from

paraprofessionals and teachers who are not highly qualified. In fact, the number of teachers hired to teach students with EBD on an emergency license is significantly greater than for other areas of teaching, including those of special education (Bradley et al., 2008). Part of this is due to the high attrition rate of teachers of students with EBD as compared to the attrition rates of other special education teachers. These high attrition rates may be the result of higher self-reported levels of stress and frustration that stem from lack of appropriate training and preparation (Bradley et al., 2008). Teachers of students with EBD also reported receiving minimal training and preparation for working with students with EBD. Even though behavioral supports are an integral part of working with students with EBD, there is no significant difference between the preservice training for teachers of students with EBD and other special education teachers. As a group, teachers of students with EBD were twice as likely to receive their credentials through alternative certification programs and were less likely to have a master's degree (Bradley et al., 2008). Schools are placing students who need the most support with unprepared and unqualified teachers.

Teachers work to maintain control of their classroom while balancing the needs of all students, both regular education students and special education students (Visser, Cole, & Daniels, 2002); however, students with behavioral and emotional disorders can be the most challenging. These students present demands ranging from poor work habits, lower achievement scores, poor social skills, and behaviors that can range from withdrawal to aggression. Because of these demands, students with emotional disorders are more likely to be placed in more restrictive environments than other students with disabilities. A larger percentage of students with EBD participate in general education

significantly less often than students with other disabilities (Bradley et al., 2008). In fact, 30% of elementary school students with EBD and 32.9% of middle school students spend time in special education classes compared with 13.7% of elementary and 17.8% of middle school students with other disabilities (Bradley et al., 2008). According to the 36th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2017), 43% of students with EBD are served in mainstream classrooms a minimum of 80% of the day, 18% are in mainstream classrooms 40%-79% of the day, approximately 21% are in mainstream classrooms less than 40% of the day, and 13% attend separate schools. These students are also more likely to be placed with other students with EBD. Eighty-two percent of students with EBD are served in classes within regular school buildings, but 18% of these students are placed in separate facilities such as residential facilities or home and hospital environments (Bradley et al., 2008).

When schools can no longer maintain appropriate discipline to ensure the safety of all students, the student with problem behaviors has his or her day shortened or is placed completely on homebound. Students with EBD experience incidents of school removal due to health-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, weapon-related violence, or physical violence (Marsh, 2018). In order for a student to be removed from the regular classroom setting, IDEA requires the following factors be taken into consideration:

- the educational benefits available to the disabled student in a traditional classroom, supplemented with appropriate aids and services, in comparison to the educational benefits to the disabled student from a special education classroom;

- the nonacademic benefits to the disabled student from interacting with nondisabled students; and
- the degree of disruption of the education of other students, resulting in the inability to meet the unique needs of the disabled student.

IDEA regulations provide that in choosing the correct placement of a least restrictive environment, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the student or on the quality of services the student needs. If a student with a disability has behavioral problems that are so disruptive in a regular classroom that the education of other students is significantly impaired, the needs of the disabled student cannot be met in that environment (Wright & Wright, 2006). While there is a full spectrum of services that should be available to students along the continuum, sometimes the last resort is to place students on homebound; however, homebound services should only be viewed as a temporary placement option.

These homebound services are designed to give students minimal assistance for their subjects and typically lack the behavior therapy interventions. In North Carolina, students who are enrolled in alternative learning programs (ALP) are overwhelmingly placed there due to behavioral issues. Day treatment facilities are also useful in working with students using cognitive behavioral therapy; however, students who transition between school settings often experience stressors during the transition. In a study by Buchanan et al. (2016), research indicated students with EBD are increasingly mainstreamed from day treatment schools to district schools without sufficient support services to guide them through the transition. In fact, 50% of treatment schools in the study did not provide a designated person to follow up with the students after they were

discharged. A part-time person filled the role in 25% of the treatment facilities. Only 25% of the facilities staffed the position full time. The study also looked at the needs of students with EBD, parent needs and supports, and teacher needs and supports during the transition process from day treatment schools to regular schools.

Three emerging themes were apparent from parent-reported student needs: (a) transition support, (b) feedback about behavior, and (c) social skills training (Buchanan et al., 2016). During transitions, students believed they were going from a well-structured, supportive environment to a school with fewer supports. The use of tangible reinforcements students earned and behavior-specific feedback was critical to student success and needed to be continued once students transitioned back into regular school. Parents and teachers also agreed that it was necessary to provide social skills training opportunities in a natural community setting that involved the use of peers (Buchanan et al., 2016). Despite the need to follow up with students as they transition, too many day treatment schools and regular schools do not provide adequate services to these students to ensure their successful integration back into the regular school setting.

Students with EBD are more likely to become costly to society in general when consideration is given to the functional impairment frequently experienced by sufferers that leads to unemployment, hospitalization, medication, and incarceration (Farrell & Barrett, 2007). Between 1990 and 2009, the number of youth with EBD who had been arrested increased from 36% to 60%, which is a statistically significant difference when compared to the number for students with other disabilities (Ciullo et al., 2016). While the number of students with EBD who earned a high school diploma has risen over the past 3 decades, these students are less likely to pursue postsecondary education. By

2009, 53% of young adults with EBD had been enrolled in postsecondary education at some time compared to the 67.4% of the general population. Of those enrolled, less than 50% completed the requirements for graduation (Wagner & Newman, 2012). This study also revealed a significant drop in the number of young adults with EBD who were employed, from 59.4% to 40.5%, and illustrated the employment instability most adults with EBD experience. Young adults with EBD lag behind the general population in positive transition outcomes, and high rates of criminal involvement suggest more effort is needed to adequately prepare these students for life beyond the school setting.

The problem of properly preparing students with EBDs for a positive and productive life continues to plague schools. School personnel are more often unprepared to teach the required skills needed for coping skills, emotional maturity, and peer relations (Nickerson & Brosow, 2003). This demand leaves teachers feeling frustrated and inadequate in addressing student needs. Students who have EBDs are more likely to have very poor outcomes in life if schools cannot detect and intervene early on in the educational process with qualified, experienced teachers using research-based interventions.

Purpose of the Study

Emotional disturbances, such as anxiety and depression, occur at alarmingly high rates in children and youth, are associated with a number of negative life consequences, and come at a tremendous cost to society (Farrell & Barrett, 2007). Research suggests that students who are diagnosed with serious emotional disorders are less likely to graduate high school than their peers. They experience less academic success and are more likely to receive disciplinary consequences that remove them from their educational

setting. They are far more likely to be adjudicated in our criminal system than other students (Huzinec, 2016). This presents a challenge to teachers and administrators everywhere. In a survey conducted by the Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education (Huzinec, 2016), teachers rated the types of programming based on student disability in terms of how challenging they are to implement. Of the responses received, 96% of educators indicated that implementing programming for students with serious emotional disorders is challenging to very challenging, while only 38% thought that implementing programming for students with learning disabilities is challenging to very challenging (Huzinec, 2016). Students who are identified as emotionally disabled also present challenges to communities as well. Children who present with preadolescent antisocial behaviors are approximately two to three times more likely to develop persistent aggressive antisocial behaviors over their lifespan (Wallinius et al., 2016). This then becomes a cycle, further exacerbating the cost and effects on our communities.

Schools struggle to identify the best way to teach students with EBD. Research over the last few decades has indicated there is little improvement in student outcomes of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Social skills curriculum and programs have been developed and marketed to assist teachers who already feel overwhelmed and underqualified, but little has been done that has proven to be successful over time. Academic interventions can be difficult for general education teachers to implement due to the lack of planning time, the intensity required to implement with fidelity, and the lack of research. The educational setting of 90% of the academic interventions was based in self-contained classrooms and not in the general education

setting (Ciullo et al., 2016).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Determining Educational Goals and Realizing Educational Excellence (DEGREE) program in a rural school district in North Carolina. Specifically, this study investigated and analyzed how successfully the DEGREE program meets the academic needs of students who are behaviorally and emotionally challenged. It evaluated the effectiveness of how the social and emotional needs of students are met in regard to teaching coping skills and life skills. It also analyzed student perceptions of how prepared they are to enter the next transition, whether it be to work or to a regular setting school. Quantifiable measures were based on student growth as evidenced by the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) results on standardized testing and passing courses.

In a study by Visser et al. (2002), key features identified in schools where inclusion is successful include:

- effective leadership which generates direction for all staff,
- a “critical mass” of staff committed to inclusive values,
- senior management who are committed to the development of good quality teaching which matches the learning styles and abilities of pupils including those with EBD, and
- a willingness and ability to access outside agencies to help develop and sustain inclusive practice.

This study occurred in a rural district in North Carolina. The system is comprised of 16 elementary schools, two intermediate schools, four middle schools, four traditional high schools, one early college high school, and one alternative school. During the first

month of the 2017-2018 school year, the district had a total of 14,581 students. There were 6,567 elementary students, 3,317 middle school students, and 4,697 high school students. There were 2,218 students who were served by the exceptional children's department. There were 121 students who had an area of disability categorized as emotionally disabled, which was .8% of the district's total student population. This was in line with the national norm for the number served as a percent of the total population. There were 7,907 students on free lunch and 643 students on reduced lunch.

The DEGREE program was developed for students who cannot be in the regular school setting due to behavioral or medical issues or students who have aged out of school but would like to graduate from high school. Some of the students are also there because their Individual Educational Program (IEP) team determined they would not be successful without attending the program. The program focuses on providing students the academic and behavioral supports they need through direct instruction. For students who attend DEGREE for behavioral reasons, the placement can be somewhat fluid. A Return to School Support Plan is developed upon initial entry to DEGREE and reviewed monthly to determine if the student will transition back to the regular school setting.

The DEGREE program serves students who are placed in the program due to behavioral, medical, or mental health and for dropout prevention. It is located in the exceptional children's wing at the district office. At the time of the study, there were two elementary students, five middle school students, and 37 high school students. Of those high school students, 11 were there for dropout prevention; however, the nature of the DEGREE program provides for fluid transition between schools, and enrollment can vary each month.

Research Questions

1. Context: What is the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?
2. Input: What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught?
3. Process: How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?
4. Product: What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?

Significance of the Study

The DEGREE program became formalized in 2010 as a result of an initiative of the newly named director of exceptional children for the district. She was concerned about the number of students who were being served in the home only. She created this program to allow students to receive a form of instruction other than that given in the home. No formal program evaluation has been conducted in the program to determine the educational impact of the setting on students until this point. The data in this study will be used to make decisions about maintaining and improving the program by identifying weaknesses and highlighting strengths. It will also be used to help ensure a protocol is in place in determining when these services are needed by the school and ensure a more timely placement of students who are experiencing severe emotional distress and dysfunction in the regular school setting. It can also be used as a decision-making protocol to determine when and what wrap around services are needed for both the student and the family before, during, and after the implementation of homebound services.

Moreover, the effects of this study could help transform the current treatment used by the district to improve the social and emotional outcomes for students who are affected by emotional and behavioral disabilities. Early intervention could help redirect students in a healthy manner.

Overview of the Methodology

This study used the CIPP model to evaluate the DEGREE program. The CIPP model of program evaluation provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating programs, projects, personnel, products, institutions, and evaluation systems (Stufflebeam, 2003). The CIPP model evaluates the context, inputs, processes, and product evaluations. This model was selected to evaluate the DEGREE program in this school district because it focuses on comprehensive evaluation within a larger framework of organizational activities.

Context evaluation. The context evaluation can aid users to define and assess goals and later reference assessed needs of targeted beneficiaries to judge a school program, course of instruction, counseling service, teacher evaluation system, or other enterprise (Stufflebeam, 2003). It evaluates whether the program goals are adequately meeting the assessed needs. The study presents the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented. It looks at what caused the need for the program and what research was used to develop the program.

Input evaluation. The next stage of the CIPP model is to look at the inputs to determine the steps needed to reach the goals. This portion is devoted to looking at the design of the program. Input evaluation assesses the alternative approaches and competing strategies, action plans, budgets, and options. It examines what the program

can do and guides structuring decisions. The input evaluation can aid evaluation users to design improvement efforts, develop defensible funding proposals, detail action plans, record the alternative plans that were considered, and record the basis for choosing one approach over the others (Stufflebeam, 2003). For this study, the inputs are identified as the academic and behavioral interventions used in the DEGREE program. This study analyzed the types of instructional practices used by teachers in the DEGREE program to address the needs of students who struggle with emotional and behavioral challenges.

Process evaluation. The third part of the CIPP model analyzes the process to determine if the intended design is measuring up to the actual design of the program. This portion of the CIPP model looks at the implementation of the program. Process evaluations monitor, document, and assess activities; they help evaluation users carry out improvement efforts and maintain accountability records of their execution of action plans (Stufflebeam, 2003). In this study, evaluators provided information about what actually occurs during a typical day at the DEGREE program. The process of the study looked at the amount of time students spend on instruction weekly and the academic progress students make while at the DEGREE program. It evaluated the motivation of the students to work their way back into a regular school setting. The study evaluated the workload of the students and the methods of instruction used to engage students.

Product evaluation. The last part of the CIPP model requires an assessment of the program. This determines if the program is working or if it is not working. Product evaluations monitor, document, and assess activities; they help evaluation users carry out improvement efforts and maintain accountability records of their execution of action

plans. Product evaluations identify and assess short-term, long-term, intended, and unintended outcomes. They help evaluation users maintain their focus on meeting the needs of students or other beneficiaries; assess and record their level of success in reaching and meeting the beneficiaries' targeted needs; identify intended and unintended side effects; and make informed decisions to continue, stop, or improve the effort (Stufflebeam, 2003). The product of this study analyzed student readiness to be able to return to their home school and if students felt the DEGREE program was beneficial to their educational experience.

Definition of Terms

ACES. Stressful or traumatizing events from a person's childhood that can negatively affect development. These events can include abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction. These experiences have a high correlation to health problems in that person's lifetime.

ALP. A program that serves students at any level, serves suspended or expelled students, serves students whose learning styles are better served in an alternative program, or provides individualized programs outside of a standard classroom setting in a caring atmosphere in which students learn the skills necessary to redirect their lives.

DSM-5. Used by health professionals and specialists to diagnose and classify mental health disorders. The goal of the DSM is to provide concise and explicit criteria to assess the presentation of symptoms in clinical settings.

DEGREE. Program for students who cannot be in the regular school setting due to behavioral issues or students who have aged out of school but would like to graduate from high school. Some of the students are also there because their IEP team determined

they would not be successful without attending the program.

EVAAS. A comprehensive reporting tool available for educators to evaluate student growth.

Functional behavior assessment. An assessment which involves a series of interviews with the parent, student, and community members as well as two observations to determine possible antecedents, patterns, and specific behaviors that prevent students from being productive in school.

Free lunch. A federally assisted meal program to provide nutritionally balanced, free lunches to students in a school setting.

Homebound instruction. Educational services provided to the student outside the school setting. For the purpose of this study, homebound instruction may take place at a centralized location at the district office of the system being studied.

IEP. A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, implemented, and revised consistent with IDEA and state law (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, n.d.).

Reduced lunch. A federally assisted meal program to provide nutritionally balanced lunches at a reduced rate to students in a school setting.

Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and statement of the problem, the statement of the purpose, definition of terms, research questions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, significance of the study, and an overview of the methodology. A review of relevant literature is presented in Chapter 2 concerning identification and prevention, behavioral interventions, academic interventions, appropriate settings, and teacher

qualifications. The review of literature provides information on the best practices in teaching students with behavioral issues. It also discusses information on how trauma influences learning and ways to help students cope with stressors. In Chapter 3, the researcher identifies the methodology of the study by identifying the population of the study, the collection of data, and the outline of the research design and statistical analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the results and recommendations for future implementation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study uses the CIPP model to evaluate the DEGREE program. The review of literature for this study is organized into four categories: (a) identification and prevention of EBDs, (b) behavioral interventions, (c) academic interventions, and (d) appropriate settings and teacher qualifications.

Identification/Prevention of EBD

Identification of students with EBDs can be a very tricky process. In a study by Wallinius et al. (2016), many predictive factors appear early on in the development of aggressive antisocial behavior. In the study, a group of males ages 18 to 25 who were incarcerated for violent crimes were asked to complete a survey called the Life History of Aggression, or LHA. Information from the survey was analyzed to determine factors that were frequently common in the group. Parenting factors such as poor parental monitoring, negative support, and psychological control have been associated with delinquent behavior in children. Many offenders grew up in the presence of childhood adversities, displayed severe school adjustment problems, and developed diverse aggressive antisocial behaviors from an early age; and these persisted into adulthood. After analyzing early predictors of aggressive antisocial behaviors, the researchers discovered severe school adjustment problems such as bullying behavior and early onset truancy to be predominant, interrelated predictors. In fact, bullying was shown as a strong risk factor for developing aggressive antisocial behavior even later in life in a study by Kjelsberg and Friestad (2009).

Childhood adversities played a major role as well. These findings highlight the importance of school adjustment in the development of aggressive antisocial behaviors

and that bullying behavior needs to be taken seriously as it may indicate a more serious trajectory among children and adolescents with behavioral problems (Wallinius et al., 2016). While all of these predictors contribute to the development of these undesired behaviors, early detection and support can alleviate the impact of these behaviors. Preventive interventions should be initiated as early as during pregnancy and the early childhood years in families with high-risk profiles to prevent or buffer the development of aggressive antisocial behaviors. Child maltreatment, especially a violent home environment, also needs to be considered a part of the larger intervention program in an attempt to break the cycle of violence because persons who have been exposed to interparental violence during childhood are at a higher risk of developing their own domestic violence and child maltreatment (Roustit et al., 2009).

In determining predictive factors of identifying students with EBDs, race may play a role. In a study done by Wiley, Brigham, Kauffman, and Bogan (2013), African-American students are twice as likely to be identified as EBD than Caucasians. Hispanic students were two-thirds as likely to be identified as Caucasian students. The study looked at the disproportionate poverty, conservatism, and the disproportionate identification of minority students with EBDs. African-American children were almost three times as likely as their Caucasian peers to live in poverty. Hispanic children were over two times more likely to be living in poverty than Caucasian children. In the Wiley et al. study, research found that African-American students were actually overrepresented in the EBD category. The EBD risk ratios indicated that African-American students were over twice as likely to be identified as EBD than Caucasian students, and Hispanic students were approximately two-thirds as likely as Caucasian students to be identified as

EBD. The researchers proposed that this disproportionate rate of identification could result from the biased interpretations of minority students' behavior and achievement, dysfunctional interactions between schools and culturally diverse families, and inadequate access to quality instruction in general education. The researchers also suggested that the overidentification of minority students could be due to the increased exposure to risk factors associated with the disability. Hispanic students were found to be underidentified and underserved in special education altogether. This is important to note because students with EBD who are not identified and treated appropriately often end up being treated as criminals in the legal system.

Regardless of race, poverty was found to have a significant negative impact on the social, emotional, and behavioral development of children. Identification of students with EBD may only occur when their behavior becomes extreme. African-American students came closer to being identified as EBD in percentages estimated in prevalence studies than any other ethnic group. In fact, the findings of this study suggest that Caucasian students and Hispanic students with EBD are more likely to be misidentified as learning disabled than African-American students (Wiley et al., 2013).

Socioeconomic factors have been positively correlated with the prevalence of emotional disorders. Researchers have created online data mapping technology to indicate "synthetic estimation" of the prevalence of SEDs in youth to identify areas of highest need for mental health services. A synthetic estimation method was used in England and Wales to develop PsyMaptic, an online tool designed to predict the incidence of psychotic disorders in small regions, using area demographic information (Green et al., 2015). This tool uses information gathered from census data and other

easily accessible, free information to discern areas that may be affected or areas that may need more allocations of mental health resources. Individual screening of mental health can be expensive and time consuming. This tool allows policy makers to better plan for mental health options in targeted areas.

While much attention is typically given to the implementation of special education services, very few systems are in place to prevent serious emotional disorders from evolving. In the Wallinius et al. (2016) study, the offenders had received massive amounts of support during school years, and still had problems getting through school, indicating the given support was either not sufficient or not sufficiently tailored to the student. Many of the participants in this study also had problems with truancy and incomplete schooling. This indicates lost instructional time could be an obstacle in receiving the particular types of interventions these students would have needed.

Many times, a substantial amount of time is lost before interventions ever occur. Signs of EBDs can become evident in children as early as 3 years of age (Poulou, 2015). Disruptive behaviors such as high levels of noncompliance and aggression are identifiable as early as the preschool years, but not all students who display these behaviors will develop the disorder. While some students may eventually overcome these difficulties, many students will continue to struggle their entire lives. Schools are not required to implement any screening to identify students upon entry but wait until much later when children are referred after behaviors begin to impede the instruction of others. Primary prevention means attempting to forestall probable disorders before they actually occur in children at risk. This could prevent a substantial number of children at risk from developing disorders or lessening the impact of the disorders once they have

occurred.

There is a consensus that severe emotional and behavioral difficulties occurring in the first 5 years of life continue or deteriorate during the school-age years and adolescence (Poulou, 2015). Because of the age of onset when students with EBD first present symptoms, pre-K programs and programs such as Head Start are the ideal places to detect these problems. Universal screening and interventions such as explicit instruction on social and behavioral skills as well as increasing parent involvement have been shown to decrease the probability of developing disorders or, at the very least, lessen the severity of it. The progressive nature of emotional or behavioral problems and the lack of preventative programs remain serious obstacles for students who suffer from emotional or behavioral disorders. In light of the growing evidence of onset of behavior problems as early as toddlerhood, early childhood presents a particularly important time to target children's risk of behavior problems (Poulou, 2015). It is repeatedly found that early problems that occur in multiple settings and relationship systems are generally more serious and stable over time (Kerr, Lunkenheimer, & Olson, 2007).

Universal interventions, those which are applied to all children in a regular setting, may be integrated into daycares, preschools, or other early childhood environments and could reduce the likelihood of students developing many disorders (Forness et al., 2000). With over one million children at risk for developing a behavior disorder in the next few years, universal screenings and interventions could make a big impact on the effect of the disorders and the academic success of students. Teaching and learning in schools have strong social, emotional, and academic components. Because relationships and emotional processes affect how and what students learn, schools and

families must address these aspects of the educational process (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Many students lack social and emotional competencies and become less connected to school as they progress from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. This lack of connection negatively affects academic performance, behavior, and health. Schools have an important role in fostering not only cognitive development but also social and emotional development. Results from a meta-analysis study by Durlak et al. (2011) indicated that students demonstrated enhanced social and emotional learning skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors following universal interventions incorporating a social and emotional curriculum. These interventions also resulted in students demonstrating lower levels of emotional distress and improved academic performance. Social and emotional learning programs showed an increase in pro-social behaviors, reduced externalizing and internalizing behaviors, and improved academic performance at all levels. These interventions are not only useful for students with EBD but can also assist all students overall.

Many tools are available to screen children during the early years. When selecting these tools, it is important to choose measures that are accurate and feasible. It should have reliable cut scores to prevent false positives and false negatives. It should not be too intensive to use in regard to personnel, time, materials, and money (Lane, Kalberg, Lambert, Crnabori, & Bruhn, 2010). Many tools are limited in use and are only developed for elementary screening, which would be best in early identification.

Universal screeners could be used to determine which children may need additional supports as they progress. Two such tools include the Systematic Screening

for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) and the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS). The SSBD costs less than \$200 to purchase. The first two stages of screening take less than 1 hour to complete. The screener focuses on both externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors. The SRSS is available at no cost and is a mass screening tool designed to identify students with antisocial behavior patterns. Teachers rate each student on seven items, taking approximately 10 minutes of time per class (Lane et al., 2010). In deciding on which screener most accurately fits the needs of the district, one must look at the intent of the screener. If the primary goal is to identify and support students with externalizing behavior patterns, each of these tools is accurate and appropriate (Lane et al., 2010).

Universal screenings are a start, but schools must follow up on the support identified students may need quickly. Severe school adjustment problems, especially bullying and early onset truancy, must be followed up and prevented early on. Students with behavioral and emotional disorders constitute major challenges to the school system, but interventions cannot depend on the school system alone. These interventions must be performed in cooperation with child health agencies and the social support system as well as in conjunction with families (Wallinius et al., 2016). These interventions should not just focus on the student's previous externalizing behavior but also what challenges lie ahead in tackling adulthood; for example, conforming to societal norms, taking responsibility for their own actions, and forming important interpersonal relationships (Wallinius et al., 2016).

Behavioral difficulties build in varying degrees and intensity as children age. The first major shift in expectations for children often occurs as they enter into public

schools. Their ability to respond to this new environment in which they are asked to sit still, refrain from talking, and do their work has implications later on in their schooling (Greer-Chase, Rhodes, & Kellam, 2002). As children begin school, the quality of their response to each task depends on the classroom social climate the teacher creates (Greer-Chase et al., 2002). High levels of aggressive behavior in first-grade classrooms proved to be a significant risk factor for aggressive behavior later on, particularly for children who were already aggressive. The reduction in classroom aggression levels proved to reduce the risk of highly aggressive children displaying high levels of aggression later on (Greer-Chase et al., 2002). Teachers who use appropriate classroom management skills in the early grades may have a significant effect on reducing aggressive behaviors later on, if properly trained.

Universal preventions have shown promising results in schools. A universal approach to prevention, through delivering cognitive-behavior skills within the classroom setting, offers a method of targeting children who may be at risk for emotional disorders. Furthermore, universal prevention presents a positive approach to social-emotional learning that focuses on building strengths in all children, by targeting known factors and teaching children skills to enhance these areas (Farrell & Barrett, 2007). All students can benefit from learning skills to help them cope with obstacles.

Behavioral Intervention

One of the first issues in working with students with behavioral difficulties is early identification to allow for timely interventions. Studies suggest that behaviors increase in intensity as students age. Maladaptive aggressive responses such as breaking rules, truancy, and fighting occurring as early as first grade predict more maladaptive

behaviors including antisocial behavior, criminality, and intravenous drug use later in life (Greer-Chase et al., 2002). Students with EBDs generally have characteristics that negatively impact academic performance, such as lack of motivation, poor attention to task, deficits in interpersonal relationship skills, attitudes about school, use of coercive tactics to manipulate the environment, oppositionality, and externalizing behavior patterns including aggressive and disruptive behavior (Vannest, Harrison, Temple-Harvey, Ramsey, & Parker, 2011). Research suggests that students who experience anger in the context of their emotional disorder have greater symptom severity than those who do not. Comorbid anger is associated with a poorer prognosis and a lower quality of life (Cassielo-Robbins & Barlow, 2016). Students with higher risks of anger are also more likely to commit a violent act. Effective disciplinary procedures in the elementary school classroom may have important developmental consequences for future maladaptive behaviors (Greer-Chase et al., 2002).

Despite the advances in treatment for emotional disorders, many research studies have been conducted that indicate most people will not receive clinical treatment or intervention. Of the small percentage of people who do, many will not complete the treatment process, will fail to respond, or will experience recurrent difficulties despite treatment (Farrell & Barrett, 2007).

The timeliness of interventions can have a major impact on effectiveness. While many systems are available to screen students to determine the psychopathology of severe behavioral disorders, finding out how to best intervene still lacks a substantial body of research on which interventions are best. Forness et al. (2000) described early intervention as secondary prevention, since the intervention usually takes place after

problems have already occurred. Many behavior patterns emerge early on in childhood development and focus on types of social interaction. Before behavioral patterns become well established, interventions can help develop adaptive and compensatory skills in children at risk (Forness et al., 2000).

In a study by Forness et al. (2000), researchers analyzed programs that used early detection and intervention for primary prevention of EBDs. The Head Start program of Youth Development was identified as the most effective early intervention. Head Start programs offer class-wide screening to identify children who are at risk for EBD before they enter school. Experience in these studies have suggested that children at risk for significant mental health disorders were as high as 6-10%, but actual identification in the EBD category for these programs was considerably less than 1%. The data suggest that less than one third of Head Start children identified as high risk for EBD are identified by the schools by third grade. They have shown a need for mental health or special education but are just not receiving it in the schools. The Head Start program offers a self-determination curriculum that uses direct instruction to teach social skills, self-management, listening, following directions, problem-solving, decision-making, and related social or behavioral skills that assist students in adaptive functioning and mental health (Forness et al., 2000).

Traditional intervention has employed a variety of approaches, but schools typically use a reactive approach to behavioral issues. These typically include self-contained behavioral classes, behavioral support offered on a withdrawal basis (a resource setting), consultation, the use of itinerant behavioral staff within the regular class, and social skills programming. Some conclusions can be made about the current

range of interventions used in schools. The interventions are expensive and place additional demands on the time and energy of the school and staff. The interventions are reactive instead of proactive because they are typically implemented after problem behaviors begin to emerge. Services are usually provided to older students instead of younger students, even though research indicates that the aggressive behaviors are better treated before the age of six and treatments become less effective with increasing age (Forness et al., 2000).

Another issue with intervention is finding the right program to use. Many programs are available that target a specific age range and group, but the effectiveness on these programs varies greatly. In developing interventions, most researchers will agree that these should consist of qualified and committed professionals, environmental supports, behavior management supports, social skill and social interaction supports, learning and academic supports, parental and family supports, and coordinated community supports (Huzinec, 2016). These components are discussed in detail later in this chapter. Many of these intervention programs only offer support in a few of these areas.

In 2013, Hanover Research compiled a report identifying effective programs for EBDs. In the report, key findings were outlined as listed below.

- The effects of “zero tolerance” policies in schools can be harmful to students with EBD because these policies remove already troubled and disengaged children from the teachers and counselors who can best help them address their difficulties.
- While teacher-focused strategies have traditionally been focused on classroom

management, new research indicates that academically focused interventions may be most effective in supporting and engaging students with conduct disorders.

- Tiered intervention systems such as RtI and PBIS are effective in supporting students with EBD.
- Peer-assisted learning strategies, class-wide peer tutoring, and self-management interventions are effective in increasing student engagement and achievement.

In a study by Farley, Torres, Wailehua, and Cook (2012), two key evidence-based practices for supporting students with or at risk for EBDs were identified: peer-assisted learning and self-management interventions. Both of these practices are relatively easy to implement across all grade levels and content areas. Peer-assisted learning is discussed in more detail later on in this chapter as an academic intervention. These strategies are good starting points for teachers of students with EBD to implement.

Self-management interventions can fall into different categories, as shown in Figure 1.

Type	Description
Self-monitoring	Students both observe and record targeted behaviors.
Self-evaluation	A student compares his or her performance to established criteria.
Self-instruction	Student-directed behavior is guided through the use of self-statements.
Goal-setting	Students select a goal and create personal guidelines for commitment and progress toward that goal.
Strategy instruction	Students are taught steps that will be followed independently with the overall purpose of solving a problem or reaching a goal.

Figure 1. Student Self-Management Interventions (Hanover Research, 2013).

Self-management asks students to manage, monitor, record, and/or assess their behavior or academic achievement. These interventions can help students with EBD practice appropriate academic behavior while learning self-management skills they do not already possess (Farley et al., 2012).

Specific interventions for behavior management have seen an increase in a wide body of research as the number of students who are diagnosed continues to grow. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Washington created a “Best Practice Guide to Intervention” as a joint venture through its Connecting IDEAS Project. This guide includes interventions for parents, teachers, and students with EBD according to what each can do to improve the situation. Interventions outlined below in Figure 2 identify specific teaching interventions for common behavioral problems typically exhibited by students with severe EBD.

Focus Area	Desired Behavior	Observable Behavior	Teaching Strategies
Appropriate Self-Expression	Students express their ideas, thoughts, and emotions using non-offensive language.	Students use inappropriate language (e.g., swearing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define offensive language. • Post lists of offensive and non-offensive words. • Send lists home to family members. • Establish link between self-esteem and language. • Teach about emotions. • Teach alternative ways to express anger. • Share feelings with others. • Role-play strong emotions. • Provide feedback. • Use journaling for self-expression. • Redirect attention. • Create incentives.
Following Directions	Child follows directions and rules, both at home and at school.	Child refuses to follow directions given by adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define problem. • Develop plan. • Use simple directions. • Be consistent. • Know when to ignore noncompliance. • Directly teach compliance. • Empower students in positive ways. • Use positive reinforcement
Honesty	Students will be honest with themselves and others.	Students lie at home, school, and in the community to family, peers, staff, and community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define problem. • Clearly establish rules. • Have specific class discussions about lying. • Recognize honest behavior. • Do not punish honesty. • Role-play honesty. • Read stories about being honest. • Refer to school counselor.
Maintaining Boundaries	Students keep appropriate distance from others and use touch in “okay” ways.	Students touch others inappropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach boundaries. • Respect cultural differences. • Recognize cultural biases. • Teach about personal bubbles. • Define boundaries as being “at arm’s length”. • Encourage alternatives to intrusive touching. • Teach alternative strategies for positive attention. • Clearly define space boundaries. • Use carpet squares. • Monitor room or seating arrangements. • Collaborate with parents and professionals. • Develop a safety plan. • Maintain appropriate confidentiality.

(continued)

Focus Area	Desired Behavior	Observable Behavior	Teaching Strategies
Recovering from Upsetting Events	Students can recover from upsetting events.	Students enter the school/classroom exhibiting behaviors that suggest anger, frustration, and an inability to cope with the demands of the current environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support students following upsetting events. • Use assistive techniques. • Process the event. • Give regular feedback. • Be patient with the recovery process. • Develop timeline of events. • Determine if need for professional assistance. • Draw conclusions. • Discuss recommendations with student. • Transition student back into classroom when appropriate. • Provide skill enhancement. • Address cognitive distortions. • Proceed with caution. • Take care.
Respecting Other's Property	Child respects the property of others, as well as the child's own.	Child destroys property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define problem. • Encourage self-monitoring. • Give verbal and nonverbal cues. • Promote communication and understanding. • Help students who are out of control. • Encourage restitution. • Coach them through apologies • Model respect and pride in ownership.
Safety	Child will be safe with others	Child harms others with physical contact, such as hitting, biting, or kicking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define problem. • Clearly establish rules. • Develop individual contracts • Use positive reinforcement. • Separate students. • Be consistent. • Teach and model journaling. • Teach relaxation. • Use role modeling.
Satisfying Interactions	Students communicate with adults in a positive manner.	Students argue, have an "attitude," or engage in power struggles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model or imitate positive communication. • Teach positive communication. • Show respectful attitude. • Use "parroting back" techniques. • Help students understand negative consequences of arguing. • Help students accept "no." • Help students learn when to say "no." • Use "DEARMAN"

(continued)

Focus Area	Desired Behavior	Observable Behavior	Teaching Strategies
Staying in Designated Areas	Students stay in the designated area (i.e., where they are expected to be).	Students wander in class, walk out of class, or run away.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define problem. • Post clear rules. • Set clear expectations. • Develop contract. • Use consistent structure. • Monitor length of instruction. • Change seating assignments. • Use floor markers. • Change room arrangement. • Be flexible. • Provide sensory input. • Minimize distractions. • Use common language. • Use nonverbal cues. • Use positive reinforcement. • Remove audience. • Use role modeling. • Practice “Playground Five Drills.” • Encourage self-monitoring. • Directly address tendency to run away.
Waiting to Talk	Students raise their hand to talk.	Students interrupt others when they are talking, as well as talking “out of turn,” or “blurting out” answers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define problem. • Post clear rules. • Set clear expectations. • Encourage self-monitoring. • Reinforce positive efforts. • Change seating arrangements. • Ignore interruptions. • Use nonverbal cues. • Practice role modeling.

Figure 2. Teaching Interventions for Students with Emotional or Behavior Disorders (Hanover Research, 2013).

While this list is not exhaustive of all scenarios, it does outline several common issues most frequently seen in the classroom. Explicit instruction and practice in a natural setting can increase student awareness of behaviors and improve outcomes. It should be noted that all of the practices are dependent on the mutual collaboration of the student, parent, and teacher. Having common goals and good communication between

all parties encourages consistency across multiple settings. Students are taught the appropriate behaviors and are given alternatives to redirect attention and incentives when desired behaviors are exhibited. Farley et al. (2012) noted that implementing these interventions for students with EBD does not guarantee improved student outcomes, but when these are used in conjunction with effective teaching, they can produce positive behavioral and academic outcomes for students with EBD.

Research also suggests that tiered intervention systems such as PBIS are effective in supporting students exhibiting conditions or conduct falling into the category of EBD. The Council for Exceptional Children has noted that Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) offer the most potential for effectiveness when implemented simultaneously. RtI programs involve a school-wide, multi-level instructional and behavioral system, screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making for instruction, movement within the multi-level system, and disability identification. These supports involve identifying specific structures for defining student success and identifying educational needs. RtI also monitors the progress of each student and has clearly defined levels of interventions for both academic and behavioral goals. Once students reach those goals, students are placed in a lower level of intervention or are completely removed from the intervention list. The RtI model is a supplement to good academic instruction, not a replacement for it (Hanover Research, 2013).

PBIS is a proactive approach to prevent problem behavior by teaching all students the expected behaviors before problems occur. By teaching these behaviors in the school setting, expectations are clearly defined and students are aware of the social expectations

of the school. Students receive recognition and/or rewards for behaving appropriately in the school setting. Disciplinary data are tracked to identify key areas when students are not behaving appropriately and changes are made as needed. When students are aware of the expectations of the school and are taught how to behave, they tend to comply (Hanover Research, 2013). Creating a school culture that promotes positive social interaction, targeted supports, and a framework of prevention such as the PBIS system can facilitate the delivery of proactive interventions for vulnerable student populations such as EBD students (LaSalle et al., 2018).

Building a positive school climate can also be used as an intervention for students with EBD. School climate is the “quality and character of school life that is based on the pattern of students’, parents’, and school personnel’s experiences of school life” (Marsh, 2018, p. 384). A positive school climate is determined by the standards, goals, ideals, interpersonal relationships, instructional practices, and organizational structures within a school and supports the individuals within the respective environment on feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. Positive school climate has been shown to reduce aggression, violence, and sexual harassment and has acted as a protective factor for the learning and positive development of youth (Marsh, 2018). Negative school climates were associated with poor student outcomes such as higher discipline issues; lower student academic achievement; social, emotional, and behavioral problems; and teacher dissatisfaction (LaSalle et al., 2018).

Behavior management supports should also be considered when developing or choosing programs for children with EBD. Traditional punitive methods of dealing with disruptive behaviors can sometimes increase the frequency of these behaviors, which

impedes student progress. These often lead to more missed instructional time and further decrease the student's academic progress. Student outcomes and increased student engagement have been found to increase when proactive methods of behavioral supports that consider individual and group components are implemented within the classroom as well as school wide. These positive supports encourage students to continue operating within the defined behavioral expectations (Huzinec, 2016). In working with students with EBD, social skill and social interaction supports and instruction are necessary.

While many research teams have endeavored to find a “cure” for this condition, no one has developed a one-size-fits-all curriculum that will permanently end the deviant behavior. Short-term treatment options cannot permanently offset the deficits of some seriously delinquent youth but can lessen the severity of it and allow students to complete their academic career with some degree of success.

Several behavioral interventions exist for children and adolescents with conduct disorders and their focus is primarily on overt maladaptive behaviors. These interventions are usually delivered within the family context; however, all family-based interventions are limited by the parental involvement in terms of effort and the socioeconomic status of the parents (Singh et al., 2007). Cognitive-behavioral skills training programs have shown to be effective with aggressive adolescents, and the effects can be maintained over time. In a study conducted by Singh et al. (2007), students with conduct disorder worked with a therapist in a single component therapy in lieu of expulsion from school. The premise of the study was to determine if adolescents could be taught methods of self-regulation to control aggressive behavior. The study used *Meditation on the Soles of the Feet*, a mindfulness technique that teaches participants to

shift attention from emotionally arousing thought, event, or situation to an emotionally neutral part of the body, the feet. This redirection of attention provided participants greater awareness of the present moment and allowed them to avoid a verbally or physically aggressive response. This intervention yielded positive outcomes and the participants in the study were able to control their acts of aggression for the remainder of their schooling. The data from the study suggest that when adolescents choose to change their behavior, they can self-regulate their aggressive behavior for as long as they wish (Singh et al., 2007).

An easy intervention for behavior management in schools is based around student choice. In a study by Morgan (2006), the promise of preference and choice-making decreased problem behavior and increased both appropriate behavior and productivity; however, the effects of choice-making seemed to vary depending on whether the student's problem behavior was maintained by escape or attention. Student interest and student choice were also shown to have a positive effect on improvement rates in a study by Vannest et al. (2011). In the study, researchers analyzed academic interventions for students with EBDs and the effect size for each. The review focused on 16 different types of interventions used with students with EBD and calculated the individual and mean improvement rate differences. When students were provided the opportunity to select their reinforcers and tasks based on a list the teacher created that incorporates the student's interest, there was an increase in task completion and accuracy.

Environmental supports in the classroom are also important in selecting the right program. Students perform better when they know what to expect. Based on this information, students should be well versed in the behavioral expectations of the

class. PBIS schools easily address this by having a behavioral matrix posted around the school. These behavioral expectations also need to be reinforced with consistent rule monitoring that provides feedback and positive corrective actions. Schedules and routines are important to students with EBD. Inconsistency gives students miscues on what is expected and when. Students need an appropriate physical environment that provides a suitably designed space for learning and social activities. Other positively correlated components of the environmental supports include developmentally appropriate schedules and transition activities, appropriate classroom materials, elimination of high traffic classroom and school areas, and seating arrangements based on individual student needs (Huzinec, 2016).

Regardless of which intervention is used, teachers must readily accept and implement the intervention with fidelity. In a study done by State, Harrison, Kern, and Lewis (2017), teachers were less likely to implement individualized interventions and reported a lack of time as the main reason these interventions were not implemented, despite seeing the positive results that followed after the interventions were implemented. Teachers are more likely to implement interventions that are less time consuming and user friendly and not likely to implement interventions perceived as very demanding. Teachers never cited lack of resources as the reason why interventions were not feasible. When teachers reported “other” reasons for not implementing interventions, they often indicated the intervention did not agree with their personal philosophies, such as using praise for something students are required to do. Teacher perceptions and attitudes sometimes impede the implementation of interventions, especially as students grow older and progress through school (State et al., 2017).

Academic Intervention

While much attention has been given to working with students to overcome their behavioral problems, very few studies have been conducted to address the academic gaps and the effectiveness of interventions for the EBD population. The majority of the research has assessed the behavioral outcomes instead of the academic outcomes (Pierce, Reid, & Epstein, 2004).

When students can be academically successful, behavioral interventions can decrease. Many of the research studies prior to 1996 overlooked the impact of academic interventions as a dependent variable. In fact, less than 20% of the studies looked at the impact of academic performance at all (Hodge, Riccomini, Buford, & Herbst, 2006). Research suggests that most students with serious emotional disorders are at least one grade level behind and academic performance remains well below the national average (Hodge et al., 2006). In a study by Nelson, Benner, Lane, and Smith (2004), students with EBD experienced large academic deficits in all content areas, and their disability had a pervasive influence on academic achievement. This further adds stress to the student who is struggling with emotional issues. The academic achievement levels of students in the study remained stable in reading and written language, but deficits in math began to broaden over time. Part of this could be explained by the students not being offered higher level math classes due to the externalizing behavioral problems associated with EBD (Nelson et al., 2004).

Many times, EBD students require much attention in the classroom to manage the disruptive behaviors that limit the amount of time for instruction; however, the importance of learning to read cannot be emphasized enough. Students who do not read

by third grade continue to have reading difficulties in high school and adulthood (Rivera Al-Otaiba, & Koorland, 2006). Special education teachers are called upon to coordinate communication with parents, develop and monitor the student IEPs and Behavior Intervention Plans, and contribute to the academic instruction for students. In a study by Farmer et al. (2016), researchers outlined a conceptual rationale and framework for refocusing the role of special educators for students with EBD as that of intervention specialists who have expertise across the interrelated domains of academic, behavioral, emotional, and social functioning. According to the study, in order to effectively intensify interventions for students with EBD and to provide the necessary levels of intervention support, schools need to have all of these roles filled in a consistent and coordinated manner. As a result, the need for schools to implement an intervention specialist to work directly with children and an intervention specialist coordinator to provide support both within the school and the community was identified. The intervention specialist should be someone who has expertise in adaptive behaviors, a strong conceptual understanding of the constraints and dynamic systems theory, and the capacity to collect data and use the information to adapt and intensify interventions as necessary (Farmer et al., 2016).

An effective practice in academic interventions for students with EBD is peer tutoring. Research evidence strongly supports the use of peers for improving academic achievement, time on task, and behavior of students, specifically with students who are EBD (Farley et al., 2012). Peer assistance involves students of mixed ability to support each other through the learning process. Peer tutoring provides opportunities for students to be the learner and the teacher. Students receive one-on-one instruction, repeated

practice, and immediate feedback, which improve the academic outcomes for students. This intervention can be used across all grade levels and within any content area and requires minimal restructuring of the teachers' lessons. Farley et al. (2012) recommended the following guidelines for teacher implementation:

1. Group students into pairs using assessments from previous assignments and adjust high-low pairings.
2. Sessions should last for 10 minutes with each student serving 10 minutes as tutor and as teacher.
3. Repeat three times weekly.
4. Model and practice with students as the first step to implementation.
5. The procedure for the tutoring begins after students read a section of text.
6. The tutors read teacher-provided questions to assess the student's understanding of the reading.
7. Tutors have the answers and provide positive feedback for correct answers. When incorrect answers are given, the tutor models the correct answers and asks the question again to give the learner the opportunity to answer correctly.
8. Students switch roles and repeat after 10 minutes.
9. The teacher circulates around the room and randomly awards points for student responses and appropriate interactions.
10. End-of-unit test scores are used to group points, and winners are announced and reinforced the following week.

Another useful strategy for improving academic outcomes for students with EBD

is self-monitoring of performance (SMP). In a study by Rafferty and Raimondi (2009), students with EBD used SMP to track their academic performance in math, which was defined by the number of problems the target student completed correctly. During the study, the teacher and student discussed the importance of practicing math problems. Next, the student was taught how to correct his or her worksheet using a key at the end of the work period. The student was taught how to count the number of problems he or she completely correctly and graph it on a chart that listed the number of math problems on the y-axis. Finally, the student was asked to perform and verbally explain each step involved in the SMP procedures until mastery was achieved. As a result, SMP was shown to be an effective intervention in producing higher levels of academic productivity and accuracy (Rafferty & Raimondi, 2009). Another interesting result was that all of the students in the study preferred using SMP to track their performance and responded positively to its use. The target students in the study all produced higher levels of accuracy and productivity using SMP and showed an increase in on-task behavior (Rafferty & Raimondi, 2009). Teachers can enable students to self-regulate their behaviors, which results in higher levels of self-efficacy, motivation, and school achievement (Zimmerman, 2002).

One problem with assessing the efficacy of math and reading interventions involves the method of delivery. In a review of literature on reading instruction by Rivera et al. (2006), 11 different reading interventions were reviewed to determine the effectiveness of these models on students with EBD. All of the investigations reported positive effects of reading interventions, but it was impossible to compare the effectiveness of the interventions due to the delivery method, the measurement used to

track improvement, the frequency of the interventions used, and the settings in which the interventions occurred. A similar review was conducted by Hodge et al. (2006) comparing math interventions. Similar problems arose from those studies and reviewers were unable to determine the direct effect on student mathematical performance; however, it is important to note that all of the interventions had a positive effect on student academic performance. The implications for this indicate that whatever teachers use as an intervention will have a positive effect on student achievement. Finding the right one that fits the budget and that teachers can buy in to will be the biggest indication of what works for students.

Appropriate School Setting/Teacher Traits/Qualifications

A primary underlying reason for problematic behavior in youth is the lack of adequate, sustained relationships with caring and concerned adult mentors during late childhood through the adolescent years (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). The extent to which students perceive support from others appears to be an important indicator of both internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. As students perceive less social support, they engage in more problem behaviors (Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, & Alvarez McHatton, 2009). In a study by Cothran, Kulinna, and Garrahy (2003), students from a variety of backgrounds were interviewed about behavior management. Three themes emerged as important by students: (a) relationships, (b) care, and (c) respect. Many students who have experienced abuse and rejection in their lives want to feel cared for and like having that care communicated to them by an adult. Students with EBD noted that even though they rejected their teachers, they still wanted to personally know their teacher and their teacher to know them. Students are willing to engage in successful

school behaviors and even strive for high levels of achievement when there is a level of trust, respect, and communication between the student and the teacher (Mihalas et al., 2009). For students who lack close adult role models of successful school and life behaviors, teachers become the primary adult who influences behavioral values and routines, in fact, more so than parents (Mihalas et al., 2009).

One of the deciding factors in whether a program will work or not ultimately depends on the professionals who implement it. Qualified and committed professionals who are well versed in the most effective pedagogy of general and special education also need specific skills related to instruction of students with EBD. These professionals need to have extensive knowledge and skills in assessment, evaluation, content, behavioral support practices, and social skills instruction methods and know how to work well with families, other educators, and professionals (Huzinec, 2016). Intervention systems have been in place for years; but to maximize intervention, special education teachers need to be trained as specialists in the area of interventions for students with EBD (Farmer et al., 2016). These direct service providers should have specific training targeted at adapting and intensifying instruction for students with emotional behavioral disorders.

In a study by Simpson, Peterson, and Smith (2011), researchers sought to identify a model of research-based effective practices for teaching students with EBDs. While authorities in the field of EBD agree that positive educational outcomes are the result of the appropriate use of effective methods and strategies, few have offered conclusive evidence on what is most effective. The researchers offered elements that they considered essential for every educational program for students with EBD. These elements serve as basic building blocks of an effective program. Seven essential

components to programs serving students with EBD were identified.

- **Qualified and Committed Professionals** – These educators need to be well versed in the basic foundations of general and special education pedagogy along with specialized skills related to the instruction of students with EBD. This specific skill set includes knowledge and skills in assessment and evaluation, content curricula, behavioral support practices, and social skills instruction methods as well as a predisposition to work effectively with family, other educators, and professionals.
- **Environmental Supports** – The authors identify 10 classroom conditions which should be in place to facilitate instruction: established behavioral expectations, consistent rule monitoring, feedback and positive corrective actions, schedules and routines, appropriate physical environment, suitably designed space for learning and social activities, developmentally appropriate schedules and transition activities, appropriate classroom materials, elimination of high-traffic classroom and school areas and other predictable disruptions, and seating arrangements based on individual students needs.
- **Behavior Management Supports** – Traditional methods of punitive disciplinary actions have been found to exacerbate the disruptive behaviors exhibited by students with EBD. Proactive methods that consider both group and individualized behavioral supports integrated within a system of school-wide and classroom-level supports have been found to be more effective in facilitating improved student outcomes and student engagement.
- **Social Skill and Social Interaction Supports** – Aligned with the positive

behavioral management and support, the authors suggest the implementation of social skills instruction. Based on the educational research, they recommend that social skill curriculum include general social skills training with additional focus on social skill acquisition deficits, social performance deficits, and the appropriateness of responses. The diverse nature of the issues that need to be addressed requires the use of a range of social instructional methods including direct skill instruction, coaching, peer development, and support programs including cognitive-based and problem-solving-oriented methods.

- **Learning and Academic Supports** – The authors recommend that academic supports include carefully regulated instructional time, individualized academic content instruction, instruction matched to individual learning style and primary modality, precise and clear pursuit of specific instructional targets, assessment and progress monitoring, and the establishment of a positive and reinforcing learning environment characterized by appropriate academic expectations. It is also suggested that a tiered approach be used to set up individualized academic plans which then should be integrated with similar behavioral supports.
- **Parental and Family Involvement** – This area is one of the most difficult components to establish. Universally, school efforts to facilitate parental involvement for any group of students have not often met with success. The authors suggest that by first focusing on what the parents might need, like emotional support, coping skill training, and stress reduction training,

educators are more likely to engage parents.

- Coordinated Community Support – Students with EBD require services and supports which go beyond the scope of what schools can provide; however, schools can work to help coordinate services. Youth with EBD and their families require community-based education and information resources: affordable support, counseling, crisis intervention services, agency-based protection and advocacy services from people who understand youth with EBD, community recreation activities willing to accommodate special need youth, childcare services, respite care, and economic and social support programs and agencies that can act as a gateway to other state and federal supports.

While these elements are essential to an effective program, Simpson et al. (2011) highlighted the key component of any program is qualified and committed professionals. Every element of the model connects to an appropriately trained and committed professional.

Teaching students with EBD can be emotionally and mentally draining for teachers. Cancio, Albrecht, and Johns (2014) found that the attrition rate of teachers of students with EBD is the highest among all disability categories, but these students are the ones who need highly qualified teachers the most. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), many states reported shortages in the field of teachers working with students with EBD. Quality teachers develop strategies all the time in their classrooms to help manage and support their students (Mihalas et al., 2009). Principals and administrative support are critical in retaining qualified teachers who work with students

with EBD. Teachers who have demonstrated longevity in the field typically indicate that they have a supportive administrator and supportive work environment (Cancio et al., 2014). Once quality teachers are found, administrators need to ensure they remain in the classroom. The consistency of quality teachers and the establishment of positive relationships with students can significantly affect educational outcomes. These teachers need to implement consistent expectations and work with general education teachers to ensure appropriate emphasis is placed on expectations regarding self-control and positive social skill development as well as academic performance (Mihalas et al., 2009).

Last, students with EBD need to be around age-appropriate peers to practice positive behavioral expectations. Students will not develop appropriate social relationships if not given a chance to develop those with coaching and support. In a study by Powers, Bierman, and Coffman (2016), students who were placed in restrictive educational placements (REPs) in secondary school due to their disruptive behavior were harmed behaviorally and educationally by these placements. The study also indicated that students placed in REPs showed lower levels of school attendance and lower levels of academic performance. The likelihood of high school noncompletion was 48% for mainstreamed students versus 62% for students in secondary REPs. Students who are placed in REPs primarily for behavioral reasons had worse grades, poorer attendance, and lower graduation rates than their learning disabled peers Powers et al., 2016). Concentrated efforts are needed to improve school-based interventions for this challenging student population.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact the DEGREE program has regarding student ability to transition back to the regular school setting. This study occurred in a rural district in North Carolina. The system is comprised of 16 elementary schools, two intermediate schools, four middle schools, four traditional high schools, one early college high school, and one alternative school. During the first month of the 2017-2018 school year, the district had a total of 14,581 students. There were 6,567 elementary students, 3,317 middle school students, and 4,697 high school students. During this study, there were 2,218 students who were served by the exceptional children's department. There were 121 students who had an area of disability categorized as emotionally disabled, which was .8% of the district's total student population. This was in line with the national norm for the number served as a percent of the total population, which is 1%. There were 7,907 students on free lunch and 643 students on reduced lunch.

The DEGREE program serves students who are placed in the program due to mental health issues such as EBDs and for dropout prevention. It is located in the exceptional children's wing at the district office. Currently, there are two elementary students, five middle school students, and 37 high school students. Of those high school students, 11 are there for dropout prevention; however, the program is designed to allow students to move to and from the program as needed, which means enrollment is varied and fluid.

This study used Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model to guide the research questions. Chapter 3 is organized by the four research questions that are aligned with the

context, input, process, and product of the CIPP model of program evaluation. This chapter includes the research design of the study, a description of the participants, the methodology procedures that were used to answer each research question, the rationale and display of the data, the assumptions, and a summary statement of the methodology.

Research Design

The need to use a data and evaluation system is clear in the school improvement process. The recommended school improvement planning process of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) uses a three-stage cycle modeled after the four-phase Plan-Do-Check-Act model. This process allows school staff to assess the current state of the school, create and implement plans based on data, and monitor and make adjustments to the plan based on the outcomes and impact of the objectives (North Carolina School Improvement Planning Guide, 2016). This process indicates the value of school evaluation at all levels of schools. This process aligns with Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model of (a) what needs to be done, (b) how should it be done, (c) is it being done, and (d) did the project succeed (Zhang et al., 2011)? The four research questions of this study were

1. Context: What is the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?
2. Input: What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught?
3. Process: How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?
4. Product: What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?

The CIPP model was the most appropriate evaluation method for this study. It provided the framework to examine the original need for the program and to determine what guided instruction at DEGREE and evaluated the impact of the DEGREE program on students who attend. This framework allowed stakeholders to voice their perceptions of the impact the DEGREE program makes on students as they transition into the next school setting.

CIPP Concept	Research Questions	Data Sources	Methods
Context	What is the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?	Program Director of DEGREE Director of Exceptional Children	Interview the Director of Exceptional Children in the school district studied.
Input	What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught?	School Staff Members Parents of students in the DEGREE program	Observation of academic and behavioral instruction at the DEGREE program Questionnaire sent to school staff members Questionnaire sent to parents of students who have been in the DEGREE program
Process	How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?	School Staff Members EVAAS Growth Data Number of Courses Passed Number of Incidents	Interview group held with school staff members at the DEGREE program Interview group held with the parents of students in the DEGREE program Compare projected EVAAS percentiles with actual percentiles Evaluate student transcripts for evidence of academic success
Product	What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?	School staff members and parents Data reviewed from existing sources of information.	Questionnaire sent to school administrators and teachers of students who have transitions back to regular schools. Interview group with parents of students who have completed the requirements and returned to the regular school setting or graduated.

Figure 3. Overview of CIPP Methods.

Participants

The participants included in the impact of this study consisted of the students who were placed at the DEGREE program due to behaviors related to EBDs and for dropout prevention. Principals, parents, and teachers of these students participated in this study to discuss the impact the program has made on the participants of DEGREE.

Context

The context evaluation presented an overview of the context of the DEGREE instructional program by looking at the history and purpose for implementing this program. This question looked at the reasoning behind developing this model of program for this school district. The question looked at discovering the problem that initiated the DEGREE program and what were the targeted populations originally intended.

This question was answered by interviewing the current director of exception children in the school district studied to provide background on why this program model was chosen. The director, who created the program, provided background information on why the DEGREE program was established. The director provided information on how the need arose for this program and who the intended participants were. The researcher asked questions that focused specifically on the needs assessed at the time the school district decided to implement the program.

The researcher also interviewed the current program manager of the DEGREE program to determine if the program still focused on the originally targeted population.

Input

The research evaluation question to be addressed for input was, “What types of

academic and behavioral interventions are taught at the DEGREE program?” This question was aimed at determining the current program capabilities and interventions being reinforced by the DEGREE program. The researcher sought to identify key practices teachers employ in addressing academic and behavioral problems of students while at the DEGREE program and which of these practices teachers and parents believe are most useful in assisting students as they transition to the next step, whether that be returning to a regular school setting or graduating from high school.

This question was answered through observations conducted at the DEGREE program as well as staff questionnaires and parent interviews. Google forms, a part of the online Google tools available for use in the district studied, was used to conduct the questionnaires. During observations, the researcher noted each time one of the behavioral interventions were taught or reinforced during instruction at the DEGREE program. This was compared to the types of behavioral interventions listed in Chapter 2 in Figure 2.

The researcher also analyzed the training teachers at the program have had that prepare them for teaching students who experience EBDs, as well as their years of experience. The questionnaire gathered information on the number of years the staff has had in education; the number of years the staff has worked with the DEGREE program, and what relevant training the staff has had on working with students with EBD.

Process

The third part of the CIPP model analyzes the process to determine if the intended design is measuring up to the actual design of the program. This portion of the CIPP model looked at the implementation of the program. Process evaluations monitor,

document, and assess activities; they help evaluation users carry out improvement efforts and maintain accountability records of their execution of action plans (Stufflebeam, 2003). In this study, evaluators provided information about what actually occurs during a typical day at the DEGREE program. The process of the study looked at the amount of time students spend on instruction weekly and at the student Return to School Placement plans to transition back to the regular school setting. The researcher analyzed if students were able to successfully make academic progress while at the DEGREE program. The study analyzed the academic grades and work completed by students at the DEGREE program and compared those with previous scores and workload completion. The researcher looked at academic growth using trends from EVAAS testing data from previous standardized tests to determine if growth was made in those subjects taken while at the DEGREE program. The researcher also used interview groups with school staff members to discuss the academic and behavioral interventions they routinely use and discuss how those interventions are implemented in the regular school setting.

Product

The last part of the CIPP model requires an assessment of the program. This determines the degree to which the program is working. Product evaluations monitor, document, and assess activities; they help evaluation users carry out improvement efforts and maintain accountability records of their execution of action plans. Product evaluations identify and assess short-term, long-term, intended, and unintended outcomes. They help evaluation users maintain their focus on meeting the needs of students or other beneficiaries; assess and record their level of success in reaching and meeting the beneficiaries' targeted needs; identify intended and unintended side effects;

and make informed decisions to continue, stop, or improve the effort (Stufflebeam, 2003). The product evaluation looked at the impact the DEGREE program has had on student educational experiences. This was done by interviewing principals of students who have transitioned back to the regular school setting and interviewing parents of students who have attended the DEGREE program. The researcher held interviews with parents of students in the DEGREE program to gain a broader vision on parent perceptions of how students are impacted by the DEGREE program, both academically and behaviorally.

Interviews

Interview groups are predominantly beneficial when a researcher intends to find out the people's understanding and experiences about issues and reasons behind their particular pattern of thinking (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). The use of purposeful, whole population sampling is best when the sampling size is a relatively small number of people. Before any surveys were sent to anyone, the researcher obtained permission from the district superintendent and the university's Institutional Review Board.

As a part of this study, the researcher sent questionnaires to each staff member at the DEGREE program who was directly responsible for teaching students. This use of purposeful, total-population sampling revealed a comprehensive view of how teachers felt about the impact DEGREE has had on student ability to transition back into the regular school setting, as well as gathered information about the types of experiences and trainings that may be helpful in teaching students with EBD. The teacher questionnaire was validated by a group of teaching experts who were not participating in this study. This expert group also provided feedback on any changes that needed to be made to the

questionnaire to enhance clarity and to improve the quality of answers that teachers were able to provide.

As part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview to further discuss their thoughts about the DEGREE program. The interviews with staff were conducted with all willing participants after questionnaires were answered and retrieved electronically through Google forms.

The same purposeful, whole-population sampling was employed to send questionnaires to all of the parents of the students who were attending the DEGREE program. These surveys were sent both electronically and in paper form to allow parents to participate even if they did not have access to technology. The questionnaires also asked parents if they were willing to participate in a focus group to further discuss their thoughts and experiences on the DEGREE program. The interviews with parents were conducted with all willing participants after questionnaires were answered and retrieved either electronically or on paper versions. Questionnaires revealed common themes that emerged and guided the interview questions.

Maximum variation sampling was used to send questionnaires to principals of students who have transitioned back to a regular school setting after attending the DEGREE program. Questionnaires were sent to two middle school principals and all four high school principals who had students who returned to their respective schools after attending the DEGREE program. These questionnaires were validated by an expert group of principals and assistant principals who were not participating in this study but also had students who transitioned back to the regular school setting. These experts offered suggestions to the questions to address topics that needed further clarification and

insight. This type of sampling provided greater insight in looking at the Return to School Placement Plans and the success of the transition from a wide range of age groups and school levels.

Display of Data

The researcher evaluated the impact the DEGREE program had on students who were attending or have attended the program in the selected school district of the study. The purpose of this evaluation was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program in order to determine if changes needed to be made in the implementation of the academic and behavioral interventions that are taught to students. The data were used to analyze the purpose and the goals of the DEGREE program and how those goals impact students. The qualitative data collected through the surveys were analyzed by viewing the data collected and categorizing the information by themes.

Observational data were coded by the frequency, duration, and timing of the academic and behavioral interventions and presented in narratives that discussed what type of intervention occurred, the targeted behavior or academic deficit addressed, and the duration of the intervention. The data collected during the observations were used to answer the input evaluation.

Data were collected on students who participated in the DEGREE program from the previous year. The results were collected and disaggregated to determine which subjects were taught to which students at the DEGREE program. The researcher compared individual student academic growth in each of those subjects using EVAAS data and determined if academic growth was achieved. This information was presented in a chart that breaks down the results of each subject and grade level taught at the

DEGREE program into three sections: (a) did not meet growth, (b) met growth, and (c) exceeded growth. The test results for each subject were not broken down into subjects by measuring grade-level proficiency or college and career readiness standards because the focus of this study was to look at academic growth, not proficiency.

Analysis of Data

The researcher presented an analysis of the data that was displayed by following the CIPP model and broken down by each question to address the context (C), the input (I), the process (P), and the product (P). Information from the interview with the director of exceptional children and the current director of the DEGREE program addressed the context of the DEGREE program by identifying what purpose the DEGREE program served and what needs the program addressed.

The input data were determined by analyzing the data from the observation and the responses from the survey to determine the types of academic and behavioral interventions that are taught at the DEGREE program. This information was compared with the information presented in Figure 2 to determine if the interventions taught by DEGREE are aligned with those recommended by the research presented. It also compared teacher perspectives of what interventions are taught with the parent perceptions of what interventions are taught. The researcher presented data from both groups to look at the similarities and differences in what is taught, what is perceived as important by both groups, and what research indicates is best practice.

The process data looked at how the objectives of the DEGREE program are aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals. The researcher analyzed data collected from emerging themes in the interviews to compare the DEGREE

program's intended purpose with parent perceptions of the purpose of the DEGREE program. The researcher also looked at the quantitative data to determine the improvement or regression made in the academic goals by analyzing the student growth as evidenced using EVAAS in each subject that was taught at the DEGREE program.

The product data looked at data that correlate with the preparation of students, both academically and behaviorally, as they transition back to a regular school setting. The researcher collected evidence to establish baseline behavior management and compare that to post-transition behavior management by comparing the frequency and severity of incidents before, during, and after DEGREE participation. The researcher also looked at class averages, the number of courses passed, and transcripts to determine if the students were able to successfully transition back to a regular school setting and make the necessary progress to be academically and behaviorally ready to graduate.

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the impact the DEGREE program has on students as they transition back to the regular school setting. The data collected from this study are displayed in a narrative in Chapter 4. Each research question and data collected to answer each question are listed in Chapter 4. Charts are included to identify academic and behavioral interventions used at the DEGREE program and the frequency with which they are taught. Exiting behavioral and academic progress was tracked and compared with entering behavioral and academic status to determine the quantitative impact on students.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore a rural school district's DEGREE program through parent and staff member perspectives using Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model of program evaluation. During the spring 2019 semester, an interview with the executive director of exceptional children, teacher questionnaire data, school transcript data, and data from teacher and parent interviews provided information for answering the following research questions:

1. Context: What is the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?
2. Input: What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught?
3. Process: How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?
4. Product: What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?

The framework for presenting the findings includes a narrative summary of the student population and the findings from the questionnaires collected and the interviews conducted. This chapter is divided into the following five sections: (a) context, (b) input, (c) process, (d) product, and (e) summary.

Context

The research evaluation question for context was, "What is the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?" This question sought to explore the district's reasoning for developing and implementing the DEGREE program. This research question was answered by interviewing the executive director of

exceptional children in the school district studied to provide background information on what necessitated the program, as outlined in Appendix A. The researcher asked a series of five questions to guide the interview. Other questions were added as the interview evolved to address specific areas of the DEGREE program.

The DEGREE program was established shortly after the director took office 10 years ago. She noted that many students with behavior and mental health issues were placed on homebound, being served in the home, and were left there. These students quickly became “out of sight and out of mind.” They were the forgotten population and the district was not doing anything to assist them with their emotional and behavioral challenges. They were taken out of the school setting and were being offered minimal services in their homes. The researcher asked the director what role she played in designing and implementing the DEGREE program. The director responded by saying,

An office beside my office came open and I asked for that office and looked at the amount of money that we were spending and determined that I could hire an EC teacher and a regular ed teacher and bring them in and actually bring the kids in for some instructional time there in that area, in that office, and I felt like that was a much better way to serve these students. Because we could teach, we had an opportunity to get them acclimated to an instructional setting, had an opportunity to interact with peers, we had an opportunity to teach them replacement skills in an instructional environment, we could get them connected to school people, and so we started that way.

This information showed that the director had some foresight into what would become an area of concern for the state. Each year, more students were being placed on a modified

schedule or on homebound instruction for behavioral issues. In 2008, the department of public instruction issued a document called “Guiding Practices” which created a specific procedure for assigning homebound instruction to students. Assigning homebound services is still an issue when students with EBDs are disciplined. A survey conducted by a special education group in spring 2017 revealed that most students on homebound received 0-3 hours of educational instruction per week, and a significant number of students stayed on homebound for over 75 days, with many others on homebound for over 150 of the 180 days in the school year (Thome & Fogg, 2019). The director created a program that would offer students the ability to remain in school and get the academic and behavioral supports needed to be more successful.

One of the interview questions was focused on discovering what research went into the development of the program. The director responded by saying,

Well, we didn't really research. I mean, the idea grew from the fact that we had kids at home who I felt needed to be on a campus, receiving instruction, and we didn't have a protocol for giving them back to their home school. So it was certainly best practice and certainly more legally sound according to IDEA to do it in a different way and that's kind of how we went about it.

The director saw a need and had enough experience to recognize there were better ways to fully assist students than to send them home. In asking about her vision in developing DEGREE, she responded by indicating that her vision was to provide an opportunity to get more kids back to their home school and in a more expedited process. She wanted the students to maintain a relationship with their home school so they would not just be out of sight and out of mind. She wanted to provide relevant behavioral examples of how

kids needed to interact with the world and not just serve them at home but allow them to be in a program that would give them some skill replacement so they actually could do better when they got back to their home school. She also wanted an intervention from the transition from homebound to school. Students were not equipped to make the full transition without some type of intervention. She also wanted the opportunity to really build some relationships with those kids. These relationships are very important in connecting with kids with EBDs.

Input

The research evaluation question for input was, “What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught?” This question was aimed at discovering what types of skills were being taught to students that would prepare them for postsecondary life. This question was answered through interviews, questionnaires, observations, and analysis of student achievement data.

Curriculum continues to be an important factor in the education of any student, but when addressing students with behavioral problems, this is crucial. With most students who are diagnosed with EBDs, life after high school is rarely successful. Learning these basic skills can allow students to become better prepared to be successful in their jobs. In the DEGREE program, curriculum has experienced some changes over the last 10 years. When asked about the curriculum used, the director responded,

Well, we initially started getting work for the home schools, and there were multiple problems with that, besides just the getting the work, and getting it complete, and sending it back, and working with teachers and helping them understand the modification that's needed, and things like that. That was just an

issue, and was for several years until we finally sat down across departments with elementary and secondary ed and looked at ... what curriculum could we use at the elementary level that would ensure those kids got the skills they needed and would assist with their transition back. And we did the same for middle school. And then for high school, we developed in-house courses that are online. So once we did all that [the superintendent] talked with principals about how we were going to grade things, how the work would be completed, and that kind of thing. That has worked really well for the last 2 or 3 years.

The implementation of a standard curriculum has helped ease some of the frustration experienced between the home school and the DEGREE program. Previously, teachers were sending unrealistic amounts of work to be completed in the 1 hour of time students received for a subject. The teachers at the DEGREE program were having difficulty figuring out how to grade the work and send work back to the home school. Teachers at the home schools experienced anxiety about the lack of preparation these students were getting with such little work completed and were frustrated that these scores were included in their end of year EVAAS growth. The teachers at DEGREE were frustrated that the amount of work was overwhelming for students who were only coming in for 1 hour of instruction in that subject. The DEGREE teachers were also from a mixed background of skill levels and subject area proficiency. They were having difficulties deciding what was possible to complete and what was not possible to finish. Now the teachers at DEGREE assign the work, grade it, and relay that information to the home school. As the curriculum continues to be refined, the staff follows guidelines to encourage students to improve their academic performance.

Observations of the program structure indicate that students each have a crate that contains all of their assignments. The crate contains folders for each subject area they are assigned. Typically, these include math, English/language arts (ELA), science, and social studies. Students who are assigned to DEGREE for all of their classes have some elective classes as well in order to satisfy graduation requirements. Some students work on the computer, while others work with paper and pencils. Some students prefer to work independently, and others work with a teacher. There are only a few students in each room at one time. Throughout the observation, the maximum number of students in a room at one time was six. The room allows for students to spread out. During the observation, students who chose to work independently are monitored by the lead teacher and she frequently keeps them focused and engaged in their work. Positive reinforcement varies from teacher to teacher.

The experience levels and backgrounds of the teachers at DEGREE are notable. While there are only six teachers who work with students at DEGREE, there are multiple areas of licensure covered. Most of the staff have more than one certification. The following are the areas of licensure and number of certifications that the six teachers of DEGREE possess, as noted by human resources:

Academically Gifted: Three

Behaviorally/Emotionally Disabled: One

Early Childhood: One

EC English/ELA: One

EC Math: One

EC Science: One

EC Social Studies: One

Elementary Education: Five

Learning Disabled: One

Math 9-12: One

Middle Grades Language Arts: One

Middle Grades Social Studies: One

Principal: Two

Reading: One

Special Education: General Curriculum: One

Special Education: Adapted Curriculum: One

The staff tends to be made up of experienced educators. According to the staff survey outlined in Appendix B, 50% of the staff have more than 30 years of experience, 25% have 10-19 years, and 25% have 20-30 years of experience. Seventy-five percent of the staff surveyed have worked with DEGREE for more than 5 years. Most of their work is with students in Grades 9-12 (75%). The majority of the time is spent teaching all academic areas (75%) with only 25% of the teachers indicating they teach behavioral and academic skills.

The main classroom has students working on multiple subjects. The ELA assignment that was observed in the main classroom had a student listening to a passage that was read by the teacher. There was limited privacy in the room, as other students were working individually or with another teacher in the room. The ELA teacher activated prior knowledge by asking probing questions to the student about having experienced similar feelings, doing the activities mentioned in the passage, and relating

information to current events. The teacher provided positive feedback at an average rate of once every 72 seconds. The student worked consistently and had a high rate of time on task since the ELA teacher was devoting all of her attention to the one student. The student was able to answer recall and inference questions with accuracy. The teacher worked with the student to explain and paraphrase the meaning of the passage for the student. The student was asked to provide another title for the passage and was able to do so. Evaluation level questions were not asked. The reading passages were limited to short, simple passages. The teacher has established a very respectful, caring relationship with this student and with others. Many of the students enter the classroom to seek her out for physical affection. She hugs them and asks them questions related to school and home. She provides positive feedback and encouragement when one student confides in her that a friend of his was trying to get him to smoke marijuana, but he refused. It is obvious these students gravitate toward this teacher and respect her.

On another side of the room, another teacher checks on a student's progress as he is working on an elective class in which he is asked to fill in blanks on a worksheet by looking at the PowerPoint of notes provided. The teacher redirects his attention to the screen when he gets off task. During one incident, she asks him about where he is living and how things are going. There is a brief interaction when she discusses the benefits of moving away from his past troubles. Another student becomes involved in the conversation. She asks how things were going in his regular school. He relays information about a recent incident with a teacher. The DEGREE teacher speaks with him about more of the details; however, she did not take the opportunity to discuss other ways he could have handled the situation. This teacher encourages students to continue

working and provides positive feedback at an average rate of once every 38 minutes.

Part of the observations conducted by the researcher was done in the exceptional children's classroom. In this classroom, students work on their academic goals listed on their IEP. This classroom is staffed with a teacher and a tutor. During this observation, the teacher arrived 8 minutes late for class, while the tutor got students settled and monitored bathroom breaks. Most of the assignments in this setting are self-paced. A new student arrived on the day of the observation. During the time allotted for this class, the teacher spent most of the class pulling up the student's IEP to determine what goals are needed. The teacher expressed frustration that she had no idea a new student would be joining the class on this day. Behavioral interventions taught during this time include following expectations of the class and ensuring students stay focused on their work.

After the first exceptional children's class was finished, a second class came in consisting of two students. The teacher asks one of the students to sum up anything she remembers from the last time they were reading. The teacher asks her questions about the passage. How were the Blacks denied rights? The teacher points out some lines from the text to discuss it. The reading material is a supplementary workbook for English learner students. The teacher reads most of the passage and asks the student to read the last few lines. The teacher provides positive feedback when the student corrects herself. The student's IEP goal asks her to read a passage and answer comprehension questions with 80% accuracy in two of three trials. The teacher prompts the student on words she does not know. The teacher has the student read a long passage without stopping until the end of the passage. The teacher then directs the student by saying,

The metaphor that compares African Americans to Americans to prepare their

rights. Let's look at the threshold. When you go into a building, you are wanting to come in out of the elements and into the house where you are sheltered and loved. What is a metaphor?

The student responds appropriately. The teacher continues to explain the literary elements. The student expresses concern about the use of the word "Negro" in the text. The teacher states that the literature sometimes can be offensive, but sometimes it is a reflection of the generational views of the time period in which it was written.

After completing observations in the main classroom and the exceptional children's classroom, the researcher noted differences in the expectations and culture of the two classrooms. The main classroom focused on the academic achievement of the work and ignored many of the inappropriate behaviors typically corrected in class. The teachers in the main classroom did not respond to the use of profanity in the classroom and did not redirect student attention during this time. In the exceptional children's classroom, the teacher continued to prompt students to follow the expectations of the classroom. She asks two students to get to work. She reminds one student to raise his hand for permission to speak. She whispers in one student's ear when he gets disruptive. She reviews the posted classroom expectations. She reinforces her expectations to one of the students and reminds that student that she expects him to set an example in that classroom. It is interesting to note that none of these interventions seem to have had any effect on student behaviors and these behaviors continued until the end of the hour of time allotted to work on these IEP goals.

When interviewing the exceptional children's teacher and the tutor using questions outlined in Appendix C, the exceptional children's teacher confirmed that no

time was given to teaching social and emotional skills explicitly. They both expressed frustration that there are no programs available to them to teach social and emotional skills or behaviors. They expressed a genuine desire to find a program that would assist students in understanding and complying with societal expectations by explicitly teaching appropriate responses. In the interview, the exceptional children's teacher noted that the DEGREE program only employs the exceptional children's teacher on a part-time basis. The exceptional children's teacher is shared with another program that is housed in the same building but is not associated with DEGREE. There is not a clear social skills curriculum that is used to teach DEGREE students, even though many of them have behavioral goals in their IEP. Many of the social skills goals are not being met. The teacher did reference a social skills book that is occasionally used in the classroom for small lessons; however, the teacher had to look for the book on the shelf to pull it out. She noted that the students who are housed in jail sometimes get these lessons, but they are not regularly implemented in the DEGREE program.

The DEGREE program has experienced some changes from the original plan. While it originally started just for homebound students, it now serves students with 504 plans and students who are on a modified day and as a dropout prevention program. Some students only go to the DEGREE program for short-term interventions. It is now made up of multiple classrooms and several teachers. According to the director, the DEGREE program has become an ingrained part of the system and continues to get better every year.

In discussing the program with the lead teacher, she stated that no day is the same in the building. She has to be careful about which students she schedules to come in and

when they come in because of the personalities of the students and their individual situation. Her main focus is keeping the students calm and mentally stable.

Today may be a good day but when they come back for their next session it may be a completely different thing. The first thing that I do try to tell them is science, math, reading, that stuff comes second. I need you stable first. I need you in a clear mind, a good mindset. It really is just about the relationships and they all come in and some of them will talk to you, some of them it takes a while. The little kid I have in there now, [Ty?], he won't speak much. He doesn't say much at all and I have to be very careful about who I put with him because he's a runner and he's self-harm. So that's another part of making my whole schedule is who can be around who. So there's not very many right now. There's a couple of more that will come in at 12:00 and it usually comes up [in here?] about 12:30-ish. So there's not much of a time that it's a little crowded in there and he does okay. I don't know, it's just different for each kid. It depends on their needs and where they're coming from. Nine times out of 10, I deal directly with the student cause the parents don't care.

Process

The research evaluation question for process was, “How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?”

This question sought to explore the impact of the DEGREE program in allowing students to gain the skills needed to achieve academic growth and improve social and emotional skills so students will become prepared to enter the workplace successfully and improve postsecondary outcomes.

The instructional hours at the DEGREE program correlate to the amount of time students in North Carolina are required to have when transitioned to a homebound setting. Typically, students are given 1 hour of instruction per week for each of their classes. Time to work on IEP goals is incorporated into the allotted time. The time spent on academics at DEGREE is approximately 20% of the allotted time per week at a traditional school. The curriculum is severely shortened and students generally do not make up any additional time completing assignments at home. Due to the shortened amount of time, students do not get the full curriculum of any subject taught. This impacts academic performance negatively.

In evaluating the effectiveness of the DEGREE program, the researcher looked at the purpose of the program from the perspective of parents and teachers. When surveyed, teachers unanimously responded that the purpose of the DEGREE program was to keep at-risk students on track to graduate. No teacher responded that the purpose of DEGREE was to prepare students for academic success, to allow students to learn social and emotional skills to assist students in transitioning back to a regular school setting, or to provide a safe environment for students with behavioral issues. According to teachers, the main mission of DEGREE is to keep students on track to graduate. This varies greatly from the parent perspective of the purpose of DEGREE. According to the results from the parent survey displayed in Appendix D, 57% of parents indicated the primary purpose of DEGREE was to provide a safe environment for students with behavioral issues, 14% indicated the purpose was to prepare students for academic success, and 28% listed the purpose was to allow students to learn social-emotional-behavioral skills that will assist in transitioning to a school setting. No parent responded that the primary

purpose of DEGREE was to keep at-risk students on track to graduate, even though the majority of the parents surveyed (71%) had students who were in Grades 9-12. None of the parents indicated that their child was taught any emotional or behavioral skills.

During parent interviews, questions were asked as outlined in Appendix E. One parent commented on the lack of academic preparation for students. She believed DEGREE did not prepare students academically. She stated that she believed her child was not sufficiently prepared to pass a GED exam or graduate with what should be the priority of the DEGREE program. In the teacher interview, a teacher mentioned that DEGREE only offers a small hope of getting a diploma. She stated that she was not really sure DEGREE had any impact on students reaching their academic and behavioral goals. She believed it had no impact on behavior at all because many of the students had already reached what they consider rock bottom and had involvement with juvenile justice.

The school district in which DEGREE operates has a total of 29 schools. Of those 29 schools, 23 schools were on the Targeted Support and Improvement List for 2018-2019 for not meeting academic growth for students with disabilities for 3 consecutive years. The student with disabilities subgroup has been a challenge for many schools in North Carolina for many years due to lack of academic growth. The students at DEGREE follow this same trend. In looking at overall academic growth, students at the DEGREE program have quite the varied past in regard to testing. Many of the students do not have enough testing history and data in EVAAS to make an accurate projection. EVAAS, developed by William Sanders, has been in place since the late 1980s. This model uses a statistical formula to calculate the academic growth of students each year and can be used to predict future testing results with accuracy for any student who has at

least 3 years of testing data. North Carolina started using EVAAS as part of the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System to evaluate teacher effectiveness during the 2011-2012 school year. Individual teacher growth, as well as school growth, is determined by this system each year. In looking at the academic growth of the students who are enrolled in the DEGREE program, seven students tested for middle school ELA. Figure 4 illustrates each student's projected percentile and their actual percentile.

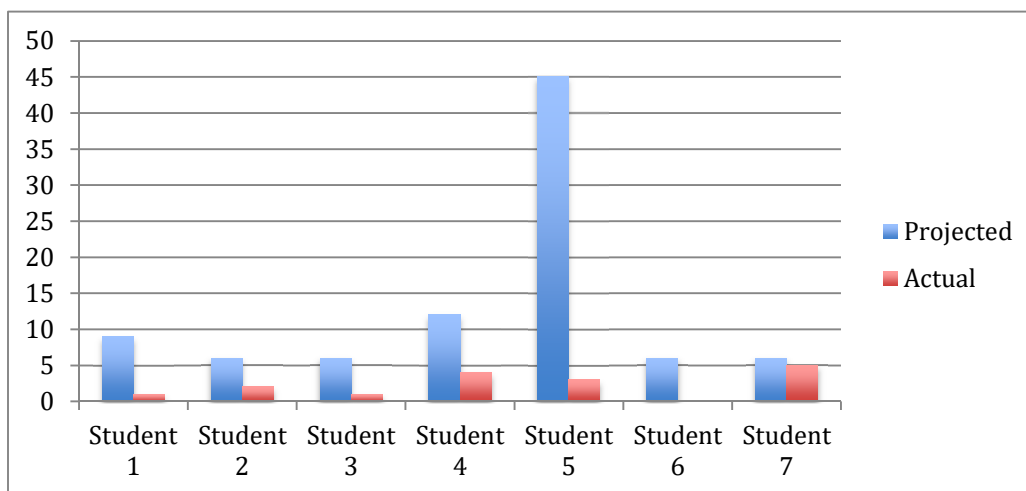


Figure 4. Middle School ELA Projected versus Actual Percentile.

None of the students scored at or above the projected percentile for ELA. Every student severely underperformed on the ELA test based on previous testing history. This indicated that none of the students in the middle school ELA classes at DEGREE met academic growth. At the high school level, there were seven students who participated in the English II End of Course (EOC) test. Figure 5 indicates their projected percentiles compared to their actual percentiles on the North Carolina English II EOC test.

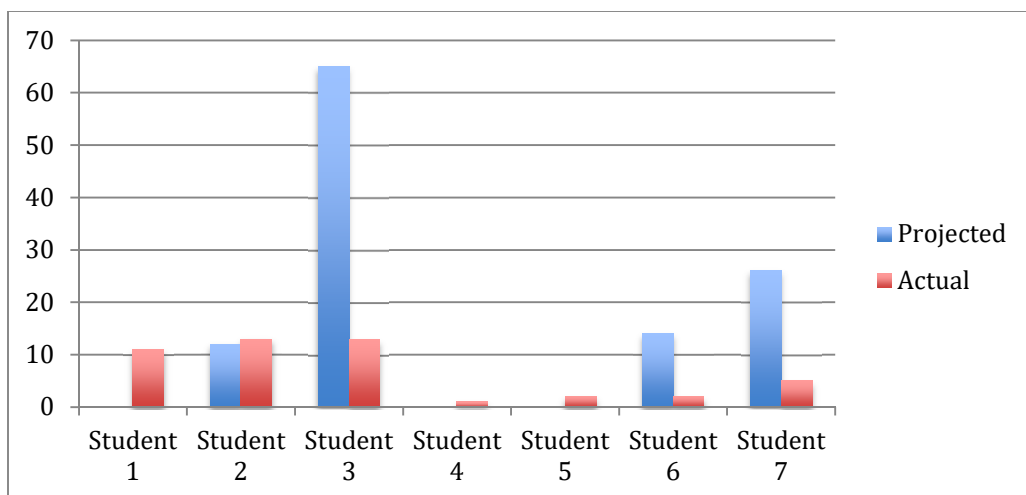


Figure 5. English II Projected versus Actual Percentiles.

Of the seven students, three did not have enough previous testing history to make a statistically accurate projection using the EVAAS model. Three students did not meet or exceed their projected percentiles. Only one student scored above the projected percentile; however, in looking at the entire proficiency of this group, EVAAS would determine that the entire ELA testing group actually regressed in their academic performance by scoring statistically lower than their projected percentiles.

In analyzing the student performance of DEGREE students in the science classroom, similar results emerged. There were four students who participated in the middle school North Carolina Final Exam for seventh grade. Projections for these students are not available, but the average percentile for these students was 8%. Three students scored at the seventh percentile and one student scored at the 11th percentile, indicating that these students performed significantly lower than the average student in North Carolina. In biology, results were very similar. Figure 6 illustrates a comparison of the projected percentiles to the actual percentiles of student achievement in biology.

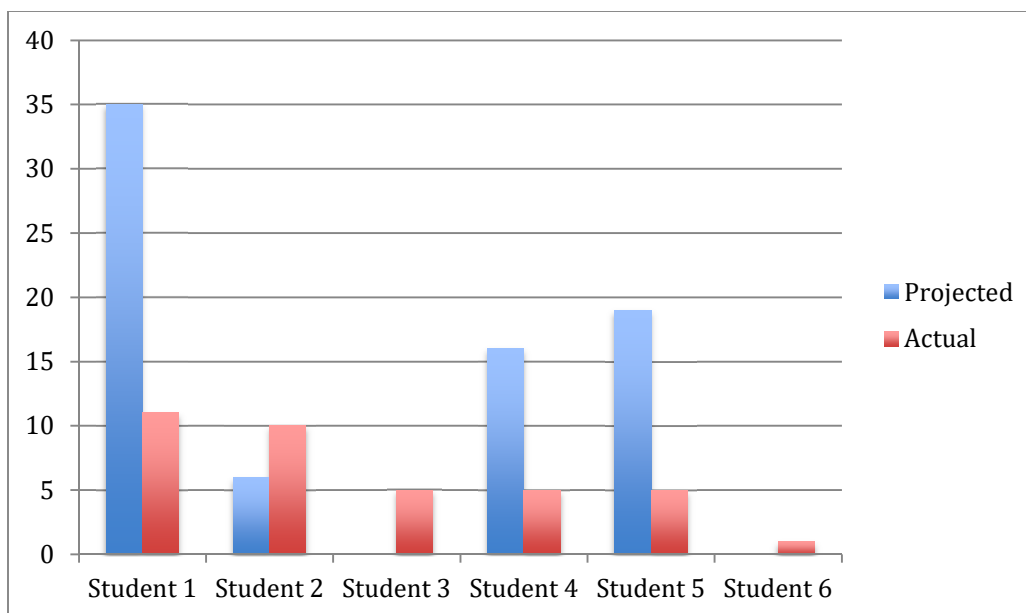


Figure 6. Biology Projected versus Actual Percentiles.

Only one student scored better than his or her projected score. Two students did not have enough testing history to make a statistically accurate projection of percentile on the biology test. Three students scored significantly lower than their projected percentiles. This significant underperformance also indicates that academic growth is not being met in the DEGREE program. Due to the re-norming of the math test and changes to the math curriculum, math scores are not available for the 2018-2019 school year.

Another factor in student performance is the communication between the school and the home. Research indicates that parents who are actively involved with the school and communicate regularly with parents have students who are more successful academically. When surveyed, 75% of teachers believed they did not regularly communicate with parents. Teacher interviews revealed that one obstacle in communicating with parents was the lack of stability regarding telephone numbers. Many parents are frequently changing their telephone numbers and are not

communicating with the program when those numbers are changed. Teacher survey responses also indicate that parents are not supportive of what teachers are trying to teach to students. During teacher interviews, teachers indicated that the unwillingness of parents to communicate with the schools may be a result of the frustration parents felt with the school system in general since most of the school-to-home communication may have been due to behavioral concerns and corrective actions.

From the parent perspective, there is a slight difference of opinion in terms of communication. According to the parent survey, 66.7% of parents believed they had regular communication with the teachers from the DEGREE program; however, during the parent interviews, all parents indicated that no academic or behavioral interventions were discussed with the teachers at DEGREE. Goals were reviewed as part of the IEP meeting, but no interventions were ever given by teachers to parents to assist with interventions at home to support academics or achievement.

Product

The research evaluation question for the product was, “What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?” This question sought to explore the perspective of principals, parents, and teachers on the impact the DEGREE program has had on student educational experiences and on student readiness to transition back to a regular school setting or into postsecondary plans.

In looking at the teacher survey, only 50% of teachers responded that the DEGREE program prepares students to be successful; however, 75% of teachers responded affirmatively that the DEGREE program was beneficial to students with

emotional and behavioral difficulties. Parent survey data indicated that 83% of parents believed their child benefitted from the DEGREE program, but only half of the parents surveyed believed the DEGREE program helps motivate their child to return to the regular school setting. The teacher survey results indicated that 100% of teachers did not believe students were motivated to return to a regular school setting.

In looking at the data from students at the DEGREE program, the desire to return to school is not evident, as 43% had a student who has been at DEGREE for 1-4 years and 14% indicated that their student had been to DEGREE multiple times in their educational experience. Forty-three percent of parents had a student at DEGREE who was in his or her first year.

When interviewing teachers, many commented on students not being socially or emotionally capable of returning to their home schools. Teachers reported that some students believed they had destroyed any chance of going back to their home schools and believed the relationships they made in those schools had been severed by their behavior. The teachers commented on the students feeling hopeless and overwhelmed in the regular school setting. When asked about the amount of instructional time given to each subject, teachers responded that the students at DEGREE could not handle any more time dedicated to instruction.

When interviewing principals about students who have returned to their home school after attending DEGREE, responses varied. At the high school level, very few students transition back. One school principal could not recall any students who transitioned back during his tenure. He stated that many of the students who attend DEGREE finish out high school while still attending DEGREE. One principal stated that

she could only recall one student in the past 5 years who returned to the school. That student was not able to transition back to a full day but was able to graduate while splitting his time between DEGREE and the home school. The student started out returning to school for one class. His return to school plan was updated every 4 weeks and his goals had to be modified to allow him the opportunity to return to the school for two classes because he did not meet the initial goals to allow him to add more classes. He was never able to return to the school on a full schedule. Behavior problems were still an issue for the student. According to the principal, some days he behaved, but other days he just refused to go to class. When asked about the benefits of the DEGREE program, the principal responded that the student would not have been able to graduate high school without the program. She believed the student did see the benefit of the program in allowing the student to graduate from high school but did not see academic or behavioral growth from the program.

In interviewing parents, common themes emerged from the information gained. These themes were smaller class sizes, the focus on requirements for graduating, and the environment in which students learn. Parents believe their students are getting more focused instruction due to the smaller class sizes. They stated that teachers have more time to address individual concerns and spend more time getting to know the students; however, parents also noted a lack of communication with the home schools and the DEGREE program. One parent stated that her child did the same assignment three times. Her daughter failed a marketing class because the teacher at the home school did not submit grades for the work she did while at DEGREE. The parent also suggested a smaller class set up at the home school to assist the students with transitioning back to the

home school instead of trying to mainstream them with the larger class sizes.

Parents appreciate the focus on meeting the requirements for graduation and not having to complete classes they believe will not help their student be successful in life after high school. Multiple parents referred to the lack of attention given to the academic progress for students and believed that the majority of the curriculum should be based on basic skills that are needed for life. One parent referenced that her child would graduate but would probably not be able to pass a basic GED test. She believed he had spent too much time on work that was not academically demanding. She believed her two children, who both went through DEGREE, regressed academically while attending.

Two parents expressed the benefits of the positive culture their child experiences while at DEGREE. Parents stated that relationships with the staff were very important and directly linked to the progress their child made at DEGREE. The staff also believe relationships are very important in working with students at DEGREE. The establishment and maintenance of relationships were evident as priorities in the observations of interactions with students. Parents indicated that the environment was much less stressful on students and there was less negative social interaction with peers than in traditional school settings.

Summary

This study used a qualitative approach to explore a rural school district's DEGREE program through parent and staff member perspectives and student EVAAS data using Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model of program evaluation. Interviews, questionnaire data, and student academic data provided information to answer the following research questions:

1. Context: What is the context within which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?
2. Input: What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught?
3. Process: How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?
4. Product: What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?

As referenced in Chapter 3 of this study, a separate means for gathering data was used to answer each research question. Through analyzing the data, the following common perspectives emerged:

- Parents believe that students benefit overall from being in the DEGREE program.
- Parents and school staff members believe that relationships have a significant impact on student achievement and behavior.
- Parents and school staff members believe that the DEGREE program provides students with EBD an opportunity to graduate from high school.
- Parents and staff members have different perspectives on the purpose of the DEGREE program.
- Parents and staff believe the DEGREE program does not teach behavioral interventions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Students who are categorized with EBDs have the highest risk for negative school outcomes of any disability (LaSalle et al., 2018). These students are more likely to drop out of high school and have higher retention rates, lower graduation rates, and higher rates of suspensions (Suh & Suh, 2007). They have a more difficult time in making and maintaining positive social interactions and are less likely to become well-adjusted adults (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017). This study sought to evaluate the perspectives of the effectiveness of a rural North Carolina's school district's DEGREE program. This program is aimed at assisting students who are placed in the homebound setting due to severe emotional and behavioral issues. The school system serves these students by placing them in a smaller school setting with very few other students in order to get them to remain in a school-like setting while meeting their academic and behavioral goals.

This study used the CIPP model of program evaluation to evaluate the DEGREE program. The CIPP model of program evaluation is a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluations of projects, programs, personnel, products, institutions, and systems (Stufflebeam, 2003). This model was selected to evaluate the DEGREE program in this school district because it focuses on the comprehensiveness in evaluation within a larger framework of organizational activities (Stufflebeam, 2003). Parent and staff member perception data were collected using questionnaires and personal interviews. The data collected from this study were provided to the district to guide further exploration of the effectiveness of the program and implications for the future.

Summary of Results

Data analysis in Chapter 4 was completed to answer the four research questions aligned with the CIPP model of program evaluation. Through qualitative research, the researcher was able to examine parent and school staff member perspectives on the DEGREE program in the school district studied. By using parent and teacher questionnaires and interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, and the director of special education, the researcher collected qualitative data to analyze stakeholder perspectives of the purpose and impact of the DEGREE program on student behavioral and academic achievement. Information gained from the surveys was summarized and placed in chart form in Chapter 4. Interview data were collected and analyzed for common themes that emerged. Data from the interviews were displayed in narrative form in Chapter 4.

Context evaluation. The context of the study assesses the needs, assets, and problems within a defined environment (Stufflebeam, 2003). It evaluates the program's ability to meet the goals initially identified by the needs of the educational community. This program evaluation answered the following research question regarding the context analysis by interviewing the director of special education for the school district studied: "What is the context in which the DEGREE program was developed and implemented?"

Based on data from the interview with the director of special education in the school district studied, the DEGREE program was implemented to assist students who were placed on homebound due to emotional and behavioral issues. These students were being taken out of the school setting and offered minimal services in their homes. The program was aimed at assisting these students with their emotional and behavioral

challenges by getting them acclimated to an instructional setting, giving them an opportunity to interact with their peers, and teaching them replacement skills in an instructional environment. Students could begin to feel a connection with school people, enabling these students to return to their home school in a more expedited manner.

Input evaluation. Input evaluation assesses alternate approaches, completing action plans, staffing plans, and budgets to meet the targeted needs and achieve goals (Stufflebeam, 2003). It helps identify the program's strategies and compares those strategies to research to provide structure for decision-making. This program evaluation answered the following research question regarding the input analysis by collecting data from observations, parent surveys, and teacher surveys: "What types of academic and behavioral interventions are taught at the DEGREE program?"

Based on data from school staff interviews, teachers believe that there are no behavioral interventions explicitly taught in the DEGREE program. Parent interviews and surveys indicated that no academic or behavioral interventions were communicated to the home and the parents did not believe academics are a top priority in the program. A common curriculum has been established, but the lack of communication between the home school and the DEGREE program impedes student ability to make academic gains.

Process evaluation. Process evaluation focuses on the running of the program and if the teaching and learning processes achieve the desired results (Aziz, Mahmood, & Rehman, 2018). The process evaluation measures the extent to which actions and methods are implemented and help evaluation users carry out improvement efforts and maintain accountability records of their execution of action plans (Stufflebeam, 2003). This question was answered by analyzing EVAAS data and through parent and staff

interviews and surveys, “How are the objectives of the DEGREE program aligned with improving student academic and behavioral goals?”

Based on data from teacher surveys, the primary purpose of DEGREE is to ensure students stay on track to graduate. This perspective differs from that of parents. Based on data from parent surveys, the majority of parents believe the primary purpose of DEGREE is to provide a safe environment for students with behavioral issues. Interviews allowed parents to express their concern for the lack of academic preparation that was given to students to succeed beyond the DEGREE program. One parent also expressed her student would not have graduated without the program.

Based on data from parent interviews, parents do believe the DEGREE program has benefitted their students; however, no parent has had communication from the program concerning academic or behavioral interventions that can be used outside the DEGREE program.

Based on data from EVAAS using student projected achievement scores versus their actual scores, students did not make academic progress while at DEGREE. In parent interviews, one parent cited the regression of her student’s grade point average and did not believe enough emphasis was placed on academics.

Product evaluation. Product evaluations help determine the general effectiveness of the program. They assist staff in determining outcomes and in keeping a focus on the purpose of the program in meeting the needs of students. This program evaluation answered the following research question regarding the product by interviewing principals, teachers, and parents: “What is the impact of the DEGREE program regarding student ability to transition back into a regular school setting?”

Based on data from principal interviews, very few students ever transition back to their home school setting. None of the principals interviewed has had a student who was able to make a full transition back to the home school. Only one principal could recall a student who had transitioned back, but the student graduated while splitting time between DEGREE and the home school.

Based on data from teacher surveys, teachers believed students were not motivated to return to their regular school setting. Teacher interviews revealed that teachers did not believe students would be able to transition back to the demands of the regular school setting. Teachers believed that students would completely give up any hope of graduating if they did not have the flexibility the DEGREE program offers. Teachers at DEGREE believed that students with EBDs benefit from being in the DEGREE program.

Based on data from parent surveys, parents were equally divided on their perspectives of the motivation DEGREE provides for their students to return to the regular school setting. During parent interviews, two of the parents revealed that they believed DEGREE was a better placement for their student due to the emphasis on relationships and the smaller class sizes.

The following statements were used in Chapter 4 to summarize the overall results of the data analysis:

- Parents believe that students benefit from being in the DEGREE program.
- Parents and school staff members believe that relationships have a significant impact on student achievement and behavior.
- Parents and school staff members believe that the DEGREE program provides

students with EBD an opportunity to graduate from high school.

- Parents and staff members have different perspectives on the purpose of the DEGREE program.
- Parents and staff believe the DEGREE program does not teach behavioral interventions.

Discussion of Findings

During data analysis, the impact of the DEGREE program on students was the common theme analyzed. The director of exceptional children noted that her original purpose for the DEGREE program was to bring students who had been placed on homebound due to behavior and mental health issues on a school campus to get them acclimated to an instructional setting, to allow them an opportunity to interact with peers, to teach them replacement behavioral skills that would assist them in positive peer interactions, and allow them to connect to school people in an instructional environment.

In observing the processes at DEGREE, students are on campus and interacting with their peers in a positive manner. The instructional setting is apparent, but the behaviors that would have resulted in office referrals are sometimes overlooked in this setting. Using inappropriate language is one of these. The researcher noted during the observations that one student blurted out profanity, but the teachers did not reprimand the student. This did not cause a major disruption, so the lesson for the day continued. While this would have been an excellent time to teach a replacement behavior in the moment, the teacher disregarded the action; however, this did have a positive effect on the connection students make with the teachers at DEGREE. Through all of the parent and teacher interviews, the importance of establishing positive relationships with adults

continued to be of extreme importance to all stakeholders. Based on a study by Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, and Oort (2011), positive relationships had a larger effect size on higher grades than lower grades. This reinforces the idea that at the secondary level, positive student-teacher relationships play a key role in student motivation and achievement. In the DEGREE setting, teachers make a concentrated effort to reaffirm student achievement with positive interactions and encouragement. The Roorda et al. study also found that teaching experience had a significant effect on the association between positive relationships and student achievement. The more experience a teacher has, the more of an impact they have on student achievement. The DEGREE program employs veteran teachers with a variety of backgrounds. Many of the teachers have multiple licensure areas and have more than 30 years of experience. Based on observations of the DEGREE program, teachers have established positive relationships with students and are aware of the triggers for each student's behavior. Their experience allows them to analyze the effect of the type and severity of the behaviors and adjust feedback accordingly. In this regard, the DEGREE program has the right teachers in place to develop and sustain positive relationships with students.

Another goal the director of exceptional children had when developing DEGREE was to get more students back into their home school and to maintain the relationship with their home school to prepare them for success when they return. Based on the data analyzed from parent and teacher interviews, the connection between the home school and the DEGREE program needs to be improved. Parents believe that the teachers from the home school have little to no communication with the DEGREE program or with the student. There is a lack of communication between schools once students transition from

their home school to the DEGREE program. There is also very little support from the DEGREE program to the home school once students transition back, if they ever reach the point where they can transition; however, very few students at the high school level ever transition back to the home school full time.

Based on data from EVAAS on student performance, the majority of students do not make academic gain while at DEGREE; however, students do make enough progress in class completion to earn credits toward high school graduation. This is essential in helping students prepare for postsecondary life. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (Breslow, 2012), a high school dropout earns \$10,386 less per year than a high school graduate. This has a significant impact on the earning potential of these students.

Based on the data analyzed from teacher and parent surveys, most stakeholders believe the DEGREE program benefits students. This benefit may be viewed as employability by gaining a high school diploma, the ability to create and sustain positive relationships with caring adults, or the ability to learn to get along with others. Regardless of how the benefit is designed, the DEGREE program does allow students to stay on track to graduate high school.

Implications for Practice

In analyzing research on students with EBDs, four common themes emerged. These themes were based on early identification and intervention, learning and academic supports, community and family involvement, and qualified and committed professionals.

Recommendation 1–Early Screener and Universal Preventions

While this system strives to be inclusive of students with EBD, these students have behaviors that impede the learning of others. IDEA requires the IEP team to take

into consideration the available educational benefits of the disabled student in a traditional classroom, the nonacademic benefits of the disabled child from interacting with nondisabled students, and the degree of disruption of the education of other students when placing a student with behaviors on homebound. If a student with a disability has behavioral problems that are so disruptive in a regular education setting as to impede the learning of others, the needs of the child cannot be met in that environment (Wright & Wright, 2006). Research suggests that severe emotional and behavioral difficulties that occur during the first 5 years of life continue to deteriorate during the school-age years. (Poulou, 2015). Interventions such as explicit instruction on social and behavioral skills have been shown to decrease the probability of developing disorders or lessening the severity of them (Poulou, 2015). In a study by Buchanan et al. (2016), parents of students with EBD reported a need for students to have transitional support, feedback about behavior, and social skills training; however, this continues to be overlooked in many school settings. Early identification and intervention of aggressive behaviors in the classroom decrease the risk of high levels of aggression later on (Greer-Chase et al., 2002). Implementing a universal prevention presents a positive approach to social and emotional learning that builds strengths and can benefit all students (Farrell & Barrett, 2007).

Based on data gained through an interview with the director of exceptional children, students have had a multitude of behavioral programs used to teach social skills; however, there has not been a concentrated effort to identify students early on and find specific triggers to cater to their specific needs. Training should occur throughout the elementary schools to focus on core behaviors to allow teachers to quickly recognize and

intervene on behavioral issues. Results from a meta-analysis study by Durlak et al. (2011) indicated that students demonstrated enhanced social and emotional learning skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors following universal interventions incorporating a social and emotional curriculum. Determining the best behavioral intervention is impossible to quantify due to the variations in delivery methods, the frequency of interventions used, and the settings in which they occur; however, research indicates that all interventions do show a positive effect on student academic performance (Hodge et al., 2006). The CHAMPS behavior model by Sprick (2009) is a useful model to easily build a structure to allow students to be successful both academically and behaviorally. This model builds on the STOIC principles:

S–Structure your classroom for success

T–Teach expectations

O–Observe student behavior

I–Interact positively

C–Correct Fluently

There is an emphasis built into the model on creating a ratio of three positive interactions to every one corrective interaction. This will also help teachers establish better relationships with students, which has a positive effect on student achievement.

Recommendation 2–Learning and Academic Supports

Research indicates that students with EBD experience large academic deficits in all content areas and their disorders have a pervasive influence on academic achievement. Student performance on reading and writing continues to be at least one grade level behind, and deficits in math begin to broaden over time (Nelson et al., 2004). Based on

the EVAAS data that were analyzed, students are not making sufficient academic progress. Students need to be exposed to strategies that would assist them in reading and math. Due to the time constraints of students being on campus for the DEGREE program, many of these interventions are not practiced and implemented routinely. Extending the amount of time students attend the DEGREE program would be beneficial so students could get a more focused intervention, both in the regular classroom and in the exceptional children's classroom. If a full-time exceptional children's teacher was added to the staff, students could be given time to practice their social and emotional skills and receive explicit instruction targeted to their specific behavior triggers. Exceptional children's teachers would be able to complete an updated functional behavior assessment on each student when they enter the DEGREE program and create a targeted behavior plan tailored to each student's independent needs.

Recommendation 3–Increased Communication between Home School, Parents, and Teachers

A primary underlying reason for problematic behavior in youth is the lack of adequate, sustained relationships with caring and concerned adult mentors during late childhood through the adolescent years (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). As students perceive less social support, they engage in more problem behaviors. Students are willing to engage in successful school behaviors and even strive for high levels of achievement when there is a level of trust, respect, and communication between the student and the teacher (Mihalas et al., 2009). Based on teacher and parent interviews, the level of communication between home schools and the DEGREE program needs to be increased. One parent (Parent A Interview) stated that her son bonded very well with a few of the teachers at DEGREE and that made all of the difference for him. Another

parent stated that her daughter had originally enjoyed going to DEGREE but had a significant decrease in motivation. After a discussion with her child and some of the teachers at DEGREE, her daughter expressed an issue with one of the teachers who had not turned in her work to the home school. This negative interaction made the student not want to return to school at all. In referencing this incident, the parent stated that “There’s a lot more to be done like communication from the school to the student, between the DEGREE program and the school” (Parent B Interview). The parent wanted to stay current on what the student was completing in the DEGREE program, but since work generally does not come home with the student, the parent had no way of checking on the student’s academic progress. This parent also stated that she had never seen a progress report come home for her student and expressed the need for better communication between the home school, the teachers at DEGREE, and the student’s parents. She suggested students should have an advocate to assist in the communication connection.

Recommendation 4–Ongoing Program Evaluation

This program evaluation was the first systematic evaluation of the DEGREE program. In order to establish the effectiveness of any program, procedures must be in place to collect and analyze data and evaluate interventions. Currently, there is not a system in place to readily disaggregate data or denote students who are receiving their instruction for DEGREE. Using a special code to indicate which of these students are receiving their instruction from the teachers at DEGREE would allow for easier opportunities to analyze student performance data to see if and when academic growth could occur. It would also allow the district to see how many of the students who are

attending DEGREE are able to graduate within 4 years of entering high school.

Another area in need of continuous monitoring is the interventions used with students. Teachers should implement academic interventions with fidelity so students could make academic progress on a regular basis.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the DEGREE program to assist students who have behavioral and emotional disorders. This study was limited to the perceptions of parents, principals, and teachers at DEGREE. As data were analyzed, further research ideas became apparent. Of the four school zones, one school zone has considerably more placements than the other three. One area for future research is to include a study on the types, frequency, and behaviors that originally place students at the DEGREE program. The researcher could analyze the behavior interventions used at the home school to determine the consistency of placement from one school zone to the next. Early interventions could be targeted more heavily in those zones to prevent escalating behaviors and reduce the number of students whose behavior prevents them from attending their home school.

Another area for research is to complete a longitudinal study to track students who are predisposed to a diagnosis of EBD or are identified through an early screener. After implementing a social skills curriculum and teaching the students appropriate behavior interventions, the researcher could determine the effectiveness of a social skills curriculum to determine if it plays a significant role in reducing negative behaviors and increasing student postsecondary success.

Another research idea is to study the effectiveness of the DEGREE program

through the student's perspective. This study is limited to the parent and teacher perspectives, but the student perspective of the impact DEGREE makes on them would be an interesting study.

Limitations

One limitation of this study arose from issues of confidentiality of student information and availability of data. There are only 43 students currently being served through this program. Of those students, many do not have enough consistent testing data to make a statistically accurate prediction on student performance. The district does not have a system in place to indicate student enrollment at DEGREE, and all information is incorporated into the home school's cumulative data. This required the disaggregation of data by a district office staff member, which is time consuming.

Another limitation is the lack of information that is captured on students after they graduate. Currently, the information is only required to be collected every 5 years by NCDPI.

Another limitation is the availability and willingness of parents to complete the questionnaire. Each student was given a questionnaire to take home and have returned. While all parents were sent the survey, their participation was strictly voluntary. Very few surveys were returned. The district assisted the researcher in mailing copies of the survey and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to student residences. Only seven parents of the 43 responded to the survey. Only three parents agreed to be interviewed for the study.

Delimitations

The students included in this study were limited to those students who were

attending the DEGREE program due to mental health issues such as EBD or drop-out prevention. Students placed on homebound due to medical reasons were not included in this study.

Summary

This study used a qualitative approach to study the DEGREE program, a program implemented to assist students who were on homebound placements, through parent and staff surveys, interviews, and student test score data using Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model of program evaluation. The DEGREE program that was studied is a rural North Carolina school district's on-site program that allows students an opportunity to attend a school-like setting when they cannot effectively participate in a regular school setting due to behavioral issues. The program is effective in keeping students with EBDs on track for graduation. Students are able to create and maintain positive connections with teachers in the program and are more motivated to complete the requirements needed to graduate. Very few students who attend DEGREE at the secondary level are able to make the full transition back to their regular home school; however, some students are able to make partial transitions back and be successful. Parents praise the program and believe the DEGREE program has had an overall benefit to their student. Overall, the program is effective in meeting the original purpose of the program.

References

- Aziz, S., Mahmood, M., & Rehman, Z. (2018). Implementation of CIPP model for quality evaluation at school level: A case study. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 5(1), 189. doi:10.22555/joeed.v5i1.1553
- Bradley, R., Doolittle, J., & Bartolotta, R. (2008). Building on the data and adding to the discussion: The experiences and outcomes of students with emotional disturbance. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 17(1), 4-23. doi:10.1007/s10864-007-9058-6
- Breslow, J. (2012, September 21). By the numbers: Dropping out of high school. Retrieved July 4, 2019, from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/by-the-numbers-dropping-out-of-high-school/>
- Buchanan, R., Nese, R. N. T., & Clark, M. (2016). Stakeholders' voices: Defining needs of students with emotional and behavioral disorders transitioning between school settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, 41(3), 135-147. doi:10.17988/BD-15-73.1
- Cancio, E. J., Albrecht, S. F., & Johns, B. H. (2014). Combating the attrition of teachers of students with EBD: What can administrators do? *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 49(5), 306-312. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451213513953>
- Cassiello-Robbins, C., & Barlow, D. H. (2016). Anger: The unrecognized emotion in emotional disorders. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 23(1), 66-85. doi:10.1111/cpsp.12139

- Ciullo, S., Ortiz, M. B., Al Otaiba, S., & Lane, K. L. (2016). Advanced reading comprehension expectations in secondary school: Considerations for students with emotional or behavior disorders. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 27(1), 54-64. doi:10.1177/1044207315604365
- Cothran, D. J., Kulinna, P., & Garrahy, D. A. (2003). "This is kind of giving a secret away...": Students' perspectives on effective class management. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(4), 435-444. Retrieved from [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(03\)00027-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(03)00027-1)
- Demaray, M. K., & Malecki, C. K. (2002), The relationship between perceived social support and maladjustment for students at risk. *Psychology in the Schools*, 39(3), 305-316. doi:10.1002/pits.10018
- Dilshad, R. M., & Latif, M. I. (2013). Focus group interview as a tool for qualitative research: An analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 33(1), 191-198. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e13a/0f7a5a455c31454df3d8d99e92097a10a947.pdf>
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

Elementary and Secondary Education Act. NC General Statute § 115C-106 (n.d.).

Retrieved from

https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByChapter/Chapter_115C.html

Farley, C., Torres, C., Wailehua, C. T., & Cook, L. (2012). Evidence-based practices for students with emotional and behavioral disorders: Improving academic achievement. *Beyond Behavior, 21*(2), 37-43.

Farmer, T. W., Sutherland, K. S., Talbott, E., Brooks, D. S., Norwalk, K., & Huneke, M. (2016). Special educators as intervention specialists: Dynamic systems and the complexity of intensifying intervention for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 24*(3), 173-186. doi:10.1177/1063426616650166

Farrell, L. J., & Barrett, P. M. (2007). Prevention of childhood emotional disorders: Reducing the burden of suffering associated with anxiety and depression. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 12*(2), 58-65. doi:10.1111/j.1475-3588.2006.00430.x

Forness, S. R., Serna, L. A., Nielsen, E., Lambros, K., Hale, M. J., & Kavale, K. A. (2000). A model for early detection and primary prevention of emotional or behavioral disorders. *Education and Treatment of Children, 23*(3), 325-345.

Garwood, J. D., & Vernon-Feagans, L. (2017). Classroom management affects literacy development of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Exceptional Children, 83*(2), 123-142. doi:10.1177/0014402916651846

- Green, J. G., Alegría, M., Kessler, R. C., McLaughlin, K. A., Gruber, M. J., Sampson, N. A., & Zaslavsky, A. M. (2015). Neighborhood sociodemographic predictors of serious emotional disturbance (SED) in schools: Demonstrating a small area estimation method in the national comorbidity survey (NCS-A) adolescent supplement. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(1), 111-120. doi:10.1007/s10488-014-0550-8
- Greer-Chase, M., Rhodes, W. A., & Kellam, S. G. (2002). Why the prevention of aggressive disruptive behaviors in middle school must begin in elementary school. *Clearing House*, 75(5), 242. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650209603948>
- Gresham, F. M. (2005). Response to intervention: An alternative means of identifying students as emotionally disturbed. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 28(4), 328-344. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hch&AN=18906271&site=ehost-live>
- Hanover Research. (2013, Jan.). Effective programs for emotional and behavioral disorders. Retrieved from https://bigfivetech.com/upload/resources_guide/Self_Management_and_Effective_Interventions_for_EBD.pdf

- Hodge, J., Riccomini, P. J., Buford, R., & Herbst, M. H. (2006). A review of instructional interventions in mathematics for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders*, 31(3), 297-311. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.gardner-webb.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.gardner-webb.edu/docview/219677515?accountid=11041>
- Huzinec, C. (2016, April 21). Critical education program components for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Retrieved from <https://www.pearsoned.com/critical-education-program-components-students-ebd/>
- Kerr, D. C. R., Lunkenheimer, E. S., & Olson, S. L. (2007). Assessment of child problem behaviors by multiple informants: A longitudinal study from preschool to school entry. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, 48(10), 967-975. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01776.x
- Kjelsberg, E., & Friestad, C. (2009). Exploring gender issues in the development from conduct disorder in adolescence to criminal behaviour in adulthood. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 32(1), 18-22. doi:10.1016/j.ijlp.2008.11.004
- Lane, K. L., Kalberg, J. R., Lambert, E. W., Crnabori, M., & Bruhn, A. L. (2010). A comparison of systematic screening tools for emotional and behavioral disorders: A replication. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 18(2), 100-112. doi:10.1177/1063426609341069

- LaSalle, T., & George, H. P., McCoach, D. B., & Polk, T., & Evanovich, L. (2018). An examination of school climate, victimization, and mental health problems among middle school students self-identifying with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 43*(3), 383-392. doi:10.1177/0198742918768045
- Marsh, R. J. (2018). Building school connectedness for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 54*(2), 67-74. doi:10.1177/1053451218765219
- Mihalas, S., Morse, W. C., Allsopp, D. H., & Alvarez McHatton, P. (2009). Cultivating caring relationships between teachers and secondary students with emotional and behavioral disorders: Implications for research and practice. *Remedial and Special Education, 30*(2), 108-125. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932508315950>
- Morgan, P. L. (2006). Increasing task engagement using preference or choice-making: Some behavioral and methodological factors affecting their efficacy as classroom interventions. *Remedial and Special Education, 27*(3), 176-187. doi:10.1177/07419325060270030601
- Nelson, J. R., Benner, G. J., Lane, K., & Smith, B. W. (2004). Academic achievement of K-12 students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Exceptional Children, 71*(1), 59-73. doi:10.1177/001440290407100104
- Nickerson, A. B., & Brosow, A. M. (2003). Identifying skills and behaviors for successful inclusion of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 28*(4), 401-409. doi:10.1177/019874290302800407

- North Carolina School Improvement Planning Guide. (2016, July). Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/program-monitoring/planning/sip-guide.pdf>
- Perry, B., & Szalavitz, M. (2017). *The boy who was raised as a dog*. New York, NY: Ingram Publishers.
- Pierce, C. D., Reid, R., & Epstein, M. H. (2004). Teacher-mediated interventions for children with EBD and their academic outcomes: A review. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*(3), 175-188. doi:10.1177/07419325040250030501
- Poulou, M. S. (2015). Emotional and behavioural difficulties in preschool. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 24*(2), 225-236. doi:10.1007/s10826-013-9828-9
- Powers, C. J., Bierman, K. L., & Coffman, D. L. (2016). Restrictive educational placements increase adolescent risks for students with early-starting conduct problems. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 57*(8), 899-908. doi:10.1111/jcpp.12487
- Rafferty, L. A., & Raimondi, S. L. (2009). Self-monitoring of attention versus self-monitoring of performance: Examining the differential effects among students with emotional disturbance engaged in independent math practice. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 18*(4), 279-299. doi:10.1007/s10864-009-9092-7
- Rivera, M. O., Al-Otaiba, S., & Koorland, M. A. (2006). Reading instruction for students with emotional and behavioral disorders and at risk of antisocial behaviors in primary grades: Review of literature. *Behavioral Disorders, 31*(3), 323-339. doi:10.1177/019874290603100306

- Roorda, D. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J. L., & Oort, F. J. (2011). The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research, 81*(4), 493-529. doi:10.3102/0034654311421793
- Rose, C. A., & Espelage, D. L. (2012). Risk and protective factors associated with the bullying involvement of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 37*(3), 133-148. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.gardner-webb.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.gardner-webb.edu/docview/1112117714?accountid=11041>
- Roustit, C., Renahy, E., Guernec, G., Lesieur, S., Parizot, I., & Chauvin, P. (2009). Exposure to interparental violence and psychosocial maladjustment in the adult life course: Advocacy for early prevention. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 63*(7), 563-568. doi:10.1136/jech.2008.077750
- Simpson, R. L., Peterson, R. L., & Smith, C. R. (2011). Critical educational program components for students with emotional and behavioral disorders: Science, policy, and practice. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*(3), 230-242. doi:10.1177/0741932510361269
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Singh Joy, S. D., Winton, A. S. W., Sabaawi, M., Wahler, R. G., & Singh, J. (2007). Adolescents with conduct disorder can be mindful of their aggressive behavior. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 15*(1), 56-63. doi:10.1177/10634266070150010601
- Sprick, R., (2009). *CHAMPS: A proactive & positive approach to classroom management*. Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest.

- State, T. M., Harrison, J. R., Kern, L., & Lewis, T. J. (2017). Feasibility and acceptability of classroom-based interventions for students with emotional/behavioral challenges at the high school level. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 19(1), 26-36. doi:10.1177/1098300716648459
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2003). *The CIPP model for evaluation: An update, a review of the model's development, a checklist to guide implementation*. 2003 Proceeding. In the Annual Conference of the Oregon Program Evaluators Network (OPEN), Portland, Oregon.
- Suh, S., & Suh, J. (2007). Risk factors and levels of risk for high school dropouts. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(3), 297-306. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.gardner-webb.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.gardner-webb.edu/docview/213268662?accountid=11041>
- Thirty-sixth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Parts B and C. 2014. (2017, December 18). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2014/parts-b-c/index.html>
- Thome, D., & Fogg, V. (2019, April 11). Guidance addresses misuse of homebound and modified day placements for students with disabilities. Retrieved from <https://www.ednc.org/2019/04/11/guidance-addresses-misuse-of-homebound-and-modified-day-placements-for-students-with-disabilities/>
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Digest of Education Statistics, 2017 (NCES 2018-070), Chapter 2. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64>

United States Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. (2016).

Teacher shortage areas nationwide listing 1990-1991 through 2016-2017.

Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/pol/tsa.pdf>

United States Department of Juvenile Justice. (2015, February 19). 102. Juvenile crime

facts. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/jm/criminal-resource-manual-102-juvenile-crime-facts>

Vannest, K. J., Harrison, J. R., Temple-Harvey, K., Ramsey, L., & Parker, R. I. (2011).

Improvement rate differences of academic interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Remedial and Special Education*, 32(6), 521-534. doi:10.1177/0741932510362509

Visser, J., Cole, T., & Daniels, H. (2002). Inclusion for the difficult to include. *Support*

for Learning, 17(1), 23-26. doi:10.1111/1467-9604.00228

Wagner, M., & Davis, M. A. (2006). How are we preparing students with emotional

disturbances for the transition to young adulthood? Findings from the national longitudinal transition study--2. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders*, 14(2), 86-98. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266060140020501>

Wagner, M., & Newman, L. (2012). Longitudinal transition outcomes of youth with

emotional disturbances. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 35(3), 199-208.

Wallinius, M., Delfin, C., Billstedt, E., Nilsson, T., Anckarsäter, H., & Hofvander, B.

(2016). Offenders in emerging adulthood: School maladjustment, childhood adversities, and prediction of aggressive antisocial behaviors. *Law and Human Behavior*, 40(5), 551-563. doi:10.1037/lhb0000202

- Wiley, A. L., Brigham, F. J., Kauffman, J. M., & Bogan, J. E. (2013). Disproportionate poverty, conservatism, and the disproportionate identification of minority students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 36(4), 29-50. doi:10.1353/etc.2013.0033
- Wright, P. W., & Wright, P. D. (2006). *Wrightslaw: IDEA 2004, parts A & B; with commentary, strategies, cross-references*. Hartfield, VA: Harbor House Law Press.
- Zhang, G., Zeller, N., Griffith, R., Metcalf, D., Williams, J., Shea, C., & Misulis, K. (2011). Using the context, input, process, and product evaluation model (CIPP) as a comprehensive framework to guide the planning, implementation, and assessment of service-learning programs. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 15(4), 57-84. Retrieved from <http://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/index.php/jheoe/article/view/628>
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory into Practice*, 41(2), 64-70. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip4102_2

Appendix A

Interview Questions – Director of Special Education

1. What is your title and position?
2. What role did you play in the designing / implementation of the DEGREE program?
3. What research was completed to determine the model for the program?
4. What elements of the DEGREE were implemented to specifically address the findings of that research?
5. What was your vision for the DEGREE program during the designing phase?
6. How has the DEGREE program fit into your original vision?

Appendix B

Staff Survey

Teacher Survey

1. How many years of experience do you have in education?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 10-20 years
- ☐ 20-29 years
- ☐ 30 or more years

2. As a teacher at DEGREE, I work primarily with the following grade levels:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ K-4
- ☐ 5-8
- ☐ 9-12
- ☐ All

3. I have worked with the DEGREE program:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ First year
- ☐ 2-4 years
- ☐ 5 or more years

4. At the DEGREE program, I primarily teach:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Math
- ☐ Science
- ☐ English/Language Arts
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ Behavior Interventions/Social Skills
- ☐ All academic classes taught at DEGREE

12/11/2018

Teacher Survey

5. The purpose of the DEGREE program is (Choose one):*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ To prepare students for academic success.
- ☐ To allow students to learn behavioral skills to be mainstreamed with regular education teachers.
- ☐ To isolate students who pose a threat to other students.
- ☐ To keep at-risk students on track to graduate.

6. The Degree program prepares students to be successful.*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders benefit from the DEGREE program.*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Students at the DEGREE program seem motivated to return to their regular school setting.*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. Are parents supportive in what you are trying to teach students?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes-Most or all are supportive
- ☐ Yes-Some are supportive
- ☐ No

10. Do you have regular communication with teachers from the previous school?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. Do you have regular communication with parents?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12/11/2018

Teacher Survey

12. What should teachers do to support students during the transition to the regular school setting?

13. What should parents do to support students during the transition to the regular school setting?

14. What do you feel could be improved in the DEGREE program?

15. What trainings have you attended that are beneficial to working with students who have Emotional and Behavioral Disorders?

16. If you would like to participate in a group interview to further discuss the DEGREE program, please leave your name and email address.

Powered by
 Google Forms

Appendix C

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience working with students at the DEGREE program.
2. How do you feel the DEGREE program impacts students in reaching their behavioral and academic goals?
3. How receptive do you feel parents of students at the DEGREE program are?
4. How frequently do you discuss the behavioral and academic goals and interventions with parents of students at the DEGREE program?
5. What do you feel was the most impactful training and/or preparation you have had to prepare to teach students at the DEGREE program?
6. What additional training, skills, resources, interventions, or supports do you feel are needed for teachers at the DEGREE program?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix D

Parent Survey

12/11/2018

Parent Survey

Parent Survey

1. My child who attends the DEGREE program is in the following grade span:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ K-4
☐ 5-8
☐ 9-12

2. My child has been in the DEGREE program:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than one
☐ One to four years
☐ 5 or more years
☐ Multiple times

3. At the DEGREE program, my child is primarily taught:

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Math
☐ Science
☐ English/Language Arts
☐ Social Studies
☐ Behavior Interventions/Social Skills
☐ All academic classes that are taught at DEGREE

4. The primary purpose of the DEGREE program is (Choose one):

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ To prepare students for academic success.
☐ To allow students to learn behavioral skills to be mainstreamed with regular education teachers.
☐ To isolate students who pose a threat to other students.
☐ To keep at-risk students on track to graduate.

5. Overall, do you feel your child has benefitted from attending the DEGREE program.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

7/5/2019

Parent Survey

6. The DEGREE program has motivated my child to return to his or her regular school setting.

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Do you have regular communication with teachers from the DEGREE program?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. What do you like best about the DEGREE program?

9. What could be improved in the DEGREE program?

10. If you would be willing to participate in a personal interview, please leave your name and email address or phone number.

Powered by
 Google Forms

Appendix E

Parent Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience having a student in the DEGREE program.
2. How do you feel the DEGREE program prepares students for their academic and behavioral goals?
3. What do the regular schools need to do to support student transition?
4. What do teachers at DEGREE need to do support students as they transition to and from the DEGREE program?
5. Did teachers at the DEGREE program discuss with you the behavioral and academic goals specific to your student?
6. Did teachers at the DEGREE program discuss with you any strategies or interventions that could be helpful at home?
7. What additional resources, interventions, or supports do you believe need to be added to the DEGREE program to help your student be successful?
8. Overall, do you feel the DEGREE program was beneficial to your student?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?