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### Self-Regulation Strategies to Improve Academic Success in Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Elementary Settings

Michelle Thoennes

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**Self-Regulation Strategies to Improve Academic Success in Students with Emotional and  
Behavioral Disorders in Elementary Settings**

by

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A Starred Paper Proposal

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

Saint Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Over the last two decades, there has been an evolving perspective on teaching socio-emotional learning in schools. Socio-emotional learning encompasses teaching the “whole child” in the areas of (1) establishing healthy peer relationships, (2) showing empathy and displaying kindness to others (3) teaching skills to succeed in post-secondary endeavors (4) becoming a contributing citizen in society (5) developing critical thinking skills and self-regulate emotions (Greenberg, 2023). Many educators have come to an understanding that to develop healthy and successful children, socio-emotional learning needs to be a part of student’s education as well as academics. “High-quality SEL programming also has been found to have a positive impact on teachers and other staff and leads to improvements in school culture and climate” (Greenberg, 2023, p. 3).

### **Background Information**

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), has been a positive influence and major contributor to the beliefs of teaching SEL alongside academics in the classroom. High quality curriculum has been developed based on the five competencies centered around CASEL: “thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors related to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making” (Greenberg, 2023, p. 3). Social-Emotional Learning has been a need in many special education disabilities or identifications, especially Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) or Emotional Disturbances (ED).

Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD) or Emotional Disturbance (ED) has been researched for over 200 years, but it wasn’t until the late 1950s and early 1960s that the term “emotional disturbance” was coined by Eli Bower. Eli Bower was an educator and counselor,

“who did research on identifying students who needed services because of severe emotional and behavioral problems” (Brodie et al., 2014, p. 1). Bower’s term “emotional disturbance” was adopted in the year 1975 by Congress when the Education For All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was passed. The definition of emotional disturbance according to Brodie et al. (2014) consisted of the following:

1. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal conditions.
4. A general, pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms, pain, or fears, associated with personal or school problems. (p.3)

In the year 1975, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act was passed. This act clearly defined what at that time was labeled as “serious emotional disturbance,” in addition to adding to the legislation a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for students with special needs. Fifteen years later in 1990, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed with reauthorizations in 1997 and 2004. In IDEA, further amendments were made to the law for those with emotional and behavioral disorders. Those amendments included the Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA), the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), and the practice of Manifestation Determination affected students with Emotional Disturbances. In the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, the term serious

was dropped from the label of “Serious Emotional Disturbance”. However, according to Brodie et al. (2014):

Emotional Disturbance is still the term identified in the IDEA. Although, many educators today prefer the term Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). This term came about in 1988 when the National Mental Health and Special Education Coalition adopted the term. Since then, it has become a popular term among educators, psychologists, and physicians. (p.1)

A child can be identified as having Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, but not be diagnosed with EBD. This is because under IDEA, schools can identify students as having a certain disability (one of the thirteen identified in IDEA). There is an evaluation that is conducted that encompasses all aspects of the whole child such as academics, social-emotional wellbeing, intellectual functioning, parental questionnaires, and history of student’s past and/or trauma. If the student meets the qualifications conducted by the IEP team, they are identified as having Emotional and Behavioral disorders. This allows the student to have an Individualized Education Plan and special education services to make progress toward the goals on the IEP. When a child is diagnosed with a specific Emotional and Behavioral Disorder such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) this is completed by a physician in a clinical setting, not an educational setting. Physicians diagnose under criteria found in the Diagnostic and Statical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). This process entails a physical examination, family medical history, mental health assessments, intellectual functioning, parental questionnaires, and a history of student’s past and/or trauma. A diagnosis helps the physician advise the right treatment for the child and understand the cause of the symptoms (Rosen, 2023).

## **Research Question**

One major question guides this literature review, “How does the use of self-regulation strategies improve academic success in students with emotional and behavioral disorders in elementary settings?”.

### **Focus of the Review**

I have researched twelve articles on the topic of self-regulation (strategies) and students with EBD in elementary settings. I have also included some articles that also talk about other age ranges up until 21 years of age. My focus is on elementary students, but it was important to talk about what they might be facing later in life as well. In my research, I also found articles on data behavior ratings and self-regulation with students with EBD which serves as evidence of self-regulation strategies working for students with EBD. The EBSCO-ERIC, APA PsycINFO, and Google Scholar databases were used to locate peer-reviewed articles that fell into the categories of self-regulation, self-control, Emotional Disturbance, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, and elementary settings.

### **Importance of the Topic**

As a Special Education Teacher in an elementary setting, I have the opportunity to teach social emotional learning to the students on my case load who are identified as having Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). During social skills groups, I implement social-emotional learning with lessons that are focused on positive relationships, growth mindsets, self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and strategies to overcome anxiety and anger. Implementing self-regulation strategies and tools is one of the first lessons that I teach to students with EBD. Students with EBD are known to have poor self-regulation abilities. This can affect relationships with their teachers, co-workers, employers, peers, families, and romantic relationships. This in turn can affect other areas of their life in the future such as keeping a steady job, paying



expenses, staying in healthy relationships, vocational success and many other areas in life. I teach self-regulation strategies to my students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders so that they understand how they can be self-aware. Teaching these strategies will help them make thoughtful decisions not based on impulse. Learning these skills will help them be successful now and later in their lives (Greenberg, 2023).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD).* Celestial (2019) defines Emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD) as the following:

is a behavior disorder or mental illness characterized by the following: an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, cultural, sensory or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interrelationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; a tendency to develop physical symptoms of fears associated with personal or school problems. (p. 81)

*Relationship Skills.* Casel's *SEL framework* (2021) defines relationship skills as the following:

The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed. Such as:

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships

- Demonstrating cultural competency
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Resisting negative social pressure
- Showing leadership in groups
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed Standing up for the rights of others. (p. 2)

*Responsible Decision-Making.* Casel's SEL framework (2021) defines responsible decision-making as the following:

The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being. Such as (SEL):

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
- Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts
- Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful inside & outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts. (p. 2)

*Self-Awareness.* Casel's SEL framework (2021) defines relationship skills as the following:

The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism. Such as:

- Integrating personal and social identities
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Identifying one's emotions
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity
- Linking feelings, values, and thoughts
- Examining prejudices and biases
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Having a growth mindset
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose. (p. 2)

*Self-Management. Casel's SEL framework* (2021) defines self-management as the following:

The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation & agency to accomplish personal/collective goals. Such as:

- Managing one's emotions
- Identifying and using stress-management strategies
- Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Showing the courage to take initiative

- Demonstrating personal and collective agency. (p. 2)

*Social Awareness. Casel's SEL framework (2021) defines social awareness as the following:*

The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Such as:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations/systems on behavior. (p. 2)

*Social-Emotional Learning. Social Emotional Learning Defined (2023) defines social-emotional learning as the following:*

Social emotional learning (SEL) is broadly understood as a process through which people build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships and making responsible decisions that supports their success in school and in life. (1)

SEL develops cognitive social competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management and social awareness, according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Developing such competencies in students fosters positive social

skills, reduces conduct problems, diminishes emotional stress and improves academic performance. (para. 2)

## **Chapter 2: Research to be Reviewed**

This research to be reviewed examines the self-regulation strategies implemented to increase academic success in youth with EBD in elementary settings. Chapter two is categorized into three units that review the literature on risk factors, small group interventions, and social-emotional learning curricula in special and general education settings and how they correlate with the focus of the research paper. As previously stated according to *Casel's SEL framework* (2021), self-regulation or self-management is described as the following:

The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation & agency to accomplish personal/collective goals, such as managing one's emotions, identifying and using stress-management strategies, exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation, setting personal and collective goals, using planning and organizational skills, showing the courage to take initiative, and demonstrating personal and collective agency. (p. 2)

### **Risk Factors and Self-Regulation**

In my research, I found four articles that discuss the risk factors for students and self-regulation for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Special Education. These articles also discuss how risk factors such as trauma, lack of family involvement, and abuse can contribute to poor self-regulation skills and lack of socio-emotional skills. Each article addresses the importance of teaching socio-emotional skills to address these issues to improve the wellbeing of the student.

Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders have challenges in self-regulation. Balart et al., (2021) conducted a study on the risk factors of a group of special education elementary

and adolescent students that participated in an intensive structured education program in their schools because of their significant needs in behavioral regulation/self-regulation. In this article labeled “Behavioral Regulation Difficulties at Primary and Secondary School: Risk and Protection Factors” research was conducted on the effects of children who did not have a parent to nurture them and teach them how to self-regulate their emotions. In fact, children without the guidance of a nurturing parent at a young age can struggle with not only self-regulation but how to identify emotions in themselves and others. Lack of proper parenting in addition to other risk factors is a critical risk factor for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) and Conduct Disorder (CD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). Furthermore, the authors speculate how labeling children with these disorders can lead to difficulties in their social environments and Juvenile Delinquency in their adolescent years (Balart et al., 2021).

One hundred students in elementary and secondary settings were referred by their schools to participate in this study of two teams who specialized in psychoeducation. The participants' socioeconomic status, culture, and diagnosis were considered, as well as their age and gender. In this study there were four risk factors that were considered parent drug use or addiction, mental disorders/comorbidities, or history of child abuse and neglect in the families. Out of the one hundred children referred, only ten were female and ninety were male. The results show that there is a significant higher need for intensive educational programs for males than for females. Adolescents in school and students that came from disadvantaged socio-economic statuses were also more likely to exhibit difficulties in self-regulation (particularly in impulse control). There was a significant number of adolescents between the ages of 8 and 13 that had a deficit in using self-regulation strategies. Thus, further impacting the need for elementary teachers to start teaching the well-being and whole child models at an early age, prior to the teenage years. In conclusion,

lack of proper parental support in the early ages of childhood and even into adolescence is the main risk factor for lack of self-regulation skills in students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Early detections might provide students with EBD the support that they need to learn self-regulation strategies to be successful during their adolescent years and into adulthood (Balart et al., 2021).

Buxton (2018) cites similar research in her article, “Viewing the Behavioral Responses of ED Children from a Trauma-Informed Perspective” from the *Educational Research Quarterly Journal*. In this exploratory study in contribution with research from a psychological evaluation on how the educational system addressed behavior responses conducted in IEPs written of Emotionally Disturbed children (ED) and how trauma could have impacted the development of the children with ED. “Since trauma has a significant impact on a child’s ability to function successfully in school settings, it is important to view the behavioral responses among ED children from a trauma-informed perspective” (Buxton, 2018, p. 31).

Every child and the history of every child is unique, and Buxton (2018) addresses the need for the IEP team to understand the whole child (present, history, trauma-based, academically, and behaviorally). According to research, viewing IEPs from a trauma-informed perspective, otherwise known as a medical outlook, is more beneficial compared to the legal perspective. IEPs have a lengthy history of being written from the legal perspective and not the medical perspective which is what we need for Special Education IEPs to be the most accurate and helpful for the students with ED. It is also well known that research has proven that students with EBD/ED have more difficulties in school than that of any other unit of students. Difficulties include the following four domains: academics, peer and adult relationships, self-regulation, and internal/external physical functioning.



Three school districts participated in this exploratory study along with psychological research who heavily relied on looking through the education system through a trauma perspective. Of those three school districts, twelve IEPs with ED children were chosen to be researched and evaluated upon. Those children were between the ages of 12 and 18, 75% were male, and 25% were female (which is congruent to the national average). The author used a “Likert scale “(*0= no/not at all stated; 1 = somewhat stated; 2 = yes/clearly stated*) on three separate occasions for evidence of behavioral responses that aligned with the four functional core domains” (Buxton, 2018, p. 37) stated previously. In conclusion, the author found that 75% of the IEPs had two or more incidences of family trauma and 92% lacked self-regulation skills (Buxton, 2018).

Results indicated that every IEP in this study included that the student had difficulty with academics, suffered from poor relationships, child delayed in the area of self-regulation, and that every IEP coincided with three of the four domains that insinuate possible trauma background. These results provide opportunities for conversations between K- 12 special educators and the field of professionals in childhood trauma to work together. Buxton (2018) stated the following:

In sum, to better strengthen an ED child’s ability to learn; build and maintain satisfactory relationships; and self-regulate at a developmentally expected level-special education practitioners are strongly encouraged to seek out opportunities to work collaboratively with those in the field of childhood trauma. (p. 44)

There are multiple risk factors including trauma that are a factor in the identification of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Some of these risk factors are clearly defined in Kulkarni and Sullivan’s (2019) research article, “The Relationship Between Behavior at School Entry and Services Received in Third Grade”. They report how emotional and behavioral disorders are only

second to anxiety disorders for the leading school identification among elementary-aged children. Alas, early identification of EBD in school-aged children is a risk factor today those results in students not being properly identified in Special Education. Due to this miss on identification students can develop unhealthy patterns and behaviors at an early age before they receive the proper identification of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. This disruptive behavior in schools can include aggressive behaviors acted on impulse resulting in a lack of self-regulation skills mixed with lower achievement in academics, especially in reading (Kulkarni & Sullivan, 2019).

This researchers' goal was to discover if kindergarten teachers' observation of students who displayed disruptive behaviors would later in third grade have an identification of an Emotional and Behavioral Disorder alongside behavior goals that address disruptive behaviors in their IEPs by the time, they are in third grade. To instill self-regulation strategies so that the students are making gains towards their IEP goals SEL instruction is a service they could be receiving to make gains in both behavior goals and academic goals. This research was conducted of a sampling of 17, 490 public school students in the United States, 990 sample schools started the program when those students were in kindergarten, 890 of those school took part in the program during the spring of the students third grade year. It is important to note that 59 percent of the students were still attending their same school from kindergarten through third grade (Kulkarni & Sullivan, 2019).

Teacher ratings and social skills rating scales were used to assess the aggressive behaviors, self-regulation strategies, and academics of the students. The results showed that externalizing behaviors such as aggression towards adults and peers along with under-achievement in academics particularly in reading indicated by the time, they were in third grade

special education identification for Emotional Disturbance (ED) with a proper behavior goal. Results indicated that boys have a higher likelihood of being identified with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders than girls, socio-economic status, and under-achievement in reading were prevalent in students with ED. Through their research Kulkarni and Sullivan (2019) discuss suggestions on how to improve early identification of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, such as the importance of early childhood programs and access to them (Kulkarni & Sullivan, 2019).

In the final article on how risk factors are attributed to emotional and behavioral disorders, Lambert et al. (2021) review research from the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS) assessments completed by teachers and students. In this study there were national representatives of 1,575 teachers who gave ratings on students using the BERS assessment scale and 793 students (ages 5 to 18 years) who rated themselves with the Youth Rating assessment scale. Of the 1,575 students rated by teachers, 246 represented the population of students with emotional and behavioral disorders and 48 of the students who completed the Youth Rating assessment scale were students who were identified as having emotional and behavioral disorders. The remaining portion of these students (n=1, 329) did not have any identification of any known disabilities. This data was collected from the fall of the 2015 school year and continued through to the spring of the 2018 school year (Lambert et al., 2021).

In this assessment scale students were rated on interpersonal strengths, intrapersonal strengths, family involvement, affective strengths, and school functioning. Teachers conducted the BERS assessment on all their students to ensure there were no biases in the research. The primary reason for this research to be conducted on both populations of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders and without was to compare the socio-emotional skills of each. In their research, the results showed that students with EBD have lower skills sets in all areas of

interpersonal, intrapersonal, family involvement, affective strengths, and school functioning. Authors contributed this to risk factors of those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (Lambert et al., 2021).

Research conducted suggested risk factors included lack of family involvement at an early age latter on influenced students interpersonal, intrapersonal, affective strengths, and school functioning resulting in lower scores on both the BERS and Youth Rating Assessment Scale. Researchers in this article argued that even children with serious family trauma and extensive trauma in their background can have intrapersonal and interpersonal strengths with the right socio-emotional education and teachers who use strengths-based approaches to instruction. In conclusion, authors find programs that train teachers to implement strengths-based approaches in the classroom to be an effective tool for students who struggle with socio-emotional skills. This training should encourage teachers to foster student strengths while working on uplifting areas of growth in students, which will positively affect their academics. While working uplifting areas of strength and encouraging growth in challenging areas of students this could help eliminate undesirable behaviors in students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (Lambert et al., 2021).

**Table 1***Summary of Findings: Risk Factors for EBD and Self-Regulation*

Authors	Study Design	Participants	Procedure	Findings
Balart, Sadurni Brugue, Perez-Burriel (2021)	Quantitative	100 children and adolescents with Special Education Needs (EBD, OD, IED, CD)	The age, gender, economic status, and diagnosis were considered by the 100 children and referred to two specialized teams. Risk factors were considered of both child and parent.	Boys are diagnosed at a higher rate than girls with emotional and behavioral disorders. There are more proactive measures set in place for boys versus girls. The teachers' awareness of the diagnosis should allow for pro-active measures to be taken in the classroom. Concern that there is an under identification in females.
Buxton (2018)	Qualitative: Exploratory Study	Behavioral Responses identified in the Individualized Education Plan of students with Emotional Disturbances	Review of Case Studies	Confirmed research on ED and trauma. In addition, gave insight to behavioral responses of student with ED, confirming three out of the four core domains that children display when experiencing trauma.
Kulkarni, Sullivan (2019)	Qualitative: Longitudinal Study  Quantitative	Behaviors were scored by teacher ratings.  Review of Data (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Program)	Data was collected from 90 kindergarten students who displayed behavior concerns and those 90 students were a part of this study through third grade.  Data collected at school entry, behavior, health, and academics.	Results indicated that behaviors displayed that would qualify a student for having a behavioral disorder such as EBD resulted in the student receiving services by the time they were in third grade. Resources for intervening early were deliberated and discussed.
Lambert, January, Gonzalez, Epstein, and Martin (2021)	Qualitative	1, 575 students 246 of these students were students with EBD 1,329 of these students were not with any identified disability	Review of Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale –3 (BERS-3)	Results indicated that students with EBD significantly had issues with emotional and self-regulation. The students who did not have an identified disability had overall a better socio-emotional understanding.

### **Small Group Interventions (SEL and Academics)**

In my research, I found three articles that discuss how small group interventions for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Special Education can increase academic skills. These articles also explain the three-Tiered system in education for example, Tier 1 is the general education classroom, Tier 2 is small group interventions where students learn academic or behavioral skills in a small group setting, and Tier 3 includes alternative-learning programs in schools. Each article addresses the importance of teaching self-regulation strategies using positive reinforcement strategies, and students' strengths will encourage growth in socio-emotional skills and academics.

In the article “Teaching Explicit Social-Emotional Skills With Contextual Supports for Students with Intensive Intervention Needs”, Bierman and Sanders (2020) complete a qualitative report on how TIER 2 Interventions can be supportive in neurodevelopmental foundations which encourages the teaching of self-regulation strategies to students with EBD who struggle to maintain positive relationships with both peers and adults, especially teachers. In turn, students with lack of self-regulation skills can have deficits in areas of socio-emotional skills, self-regulation, anger management, and problem-solving skills resulting in poor academic reports, low academic engagement, truancy, and a high dropout rate. Researchers in this article also argue that both Tier 1 (social skills instruction in the general education classroom) and Tier 2 (social skills instruction in a small group setting) can be beneficial when taught together with fidelity (Bierman & Sanders, 2020).

Deficits in self-regulation are a common factor for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). “Self-regulation .... relies on inhibitory control-the capacity to deflect or block impulsive responses to enact more adaptive responses in pursuit of longer-term

goals” (Bierman & Sanders, 2020, p.15). “Children who have difficulties regulating emotion show frequent displays of irritability and experience easily aroused feelings of anxiety, anger, or ambivalence, finding it difficult to calm down once upset” (Bierman & Sanders, 2020, p.15). Researchers in this article examined the effectiveness of Tier 2 small group interventions that made use of cognitive-behavioral strategies on students with EBD. Despite research suggesting the relevance of evidenced-based SEL programs for students with EBD, often educational systems resort to other means to provide social skills education. “It is anticipated that about 15% of students are experiencing social adjustment difficulties that require more intensive intervention than that provided by universal programming” (Bierman & Sanders, 2020, p.15). This article examined three programs that examined the importance of Tier 2 small group interventions (Bierman & Sanders, 2020).

The Collaborative Life Skills Program (CLS) was designed to enhance the organizational development and socio-emotional skills of students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who also have EBD. The CLS assesses students' socio-emotional development across multiple domains such as school, home, and personal accounts. In twelve sessions led by mental health professionals, students participated in socio-emotional lessons throughout a two-month time frame. Before and after sessions were completed, parents filled out social skill ratings on their children and teachers completed academic performance ratings on their students. Results concluded that students performed better academically and socially while participating in Tier 2 small group social skills trainings by mental health professionals (Bierman & Sanders, 2020).

The Coping Power program was developed to decrease the occurrence of child aggression alongside disruptive behavior. In this program there are 34 weekly sessions for

students and parent sessions that met bi-weekly during the same time frame as the students' sessions. The sessions for the children and parents addressed issues by licensed counselors “such as establishing long-and-short term goals, reviewing organization and study skills, perspective taking, identifying signs of anger in the body, learning coping skills for anger, problem solving, coping with peer pressure, and cooperating with peers” (Bierman & Sanders, 2020, p.18). The results concluded that students who participated in the randomized trial with licensed counselors in a Tier 2 setting improved their socio-emotional skills and progressed in their academics (Bierman & Sanders, 2020).

The final program in their research was the Cognitive Behavior Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) which was developed to discover the importance of Tier 2 socio-emotional instruction based upon the negative outcomes of trauma with students with EBD. In an elementary setting, 10 sessions in a small group setting with peers, three one-on-one sessions, and three sessions with parents were conducted. In these sessions, mental health professionals worked with students on self-regulation skills and coping strategies. “It proved effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD” (Bierman & Sanders, 2020, p.19). Researchers noted the importance of incorporating Tier 2 socio-emotional interventions alongside Tier 1 socio-emotional learning in schools to increase SEL support for students with EBD (Bierman & Sanders, 2020).

In conclusion, according to Bierman and Sanders (2020) their research stated the following:

Accumulating research demonstrates that systematic skill training programs that target the self-regulation and emotional skills that underly effective social-emotional



functioning can be effectively implemented by school personnel in school settings and significantly improve the school adjustment of students with or at risk of EBDs. (p.21)

This research concludes that despite the evidence of Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions being effective for the self-regulation of students with EBD most educational systems are not incorporating the tiered levels to their utmost effectiveness. Researchers of this article suggest that schools should implement an evidence-based Tiered Systematic approach to socio-emotional learning. Some challenges that might arise in incorporating a tiered system would be staffing shortages, organizational and resource support, and databased systems that are effective in the process (Bierman & Sanders, 2020).

Research has shown the importance of tracking data in education in academic and behavioral areas. Small group intervention can coincide with data collection of students with special needs including Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Tier 2 settings. The *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* put out an article by Briesch et al. (2020) that discussed the “Treatment Sensitivity of Direct Behavior Rating-Multi-Item Scales in the Context of a Daily Report Card Intervention.” Researchers in this article address concerns of previous studies focusing on Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR) on active off task behavior (disruption), respectful behavior, and the engagement of academic activities when there are many other behavioral concerns identified by educators. “Thus, the goal of this study was to advance the science of behavioral progress monitoring tools by assessing the treatment sensitivity of four newly developed teacher-completed behavior ratings in the context of an evidence-based classroom intervention” (Briesch et al., 2020, p. 30).

Researchers in this study chose the Daily Report Card (DRC) system because it is one of my most researched and well-known interventions for students with ADHD and EBD. By using

a DRC within in a small group Tier 2 setting of the check in and check out system, researchers were able to assess whether the skills that the students were being taught were being in a small group setting were being generalized across all settings of the school day. Participants were six elementary teachers (Kindergarten through Grade 4), one special education teacher and five general education teachers from two elementary schools in Ohio. Each teacher selected one student from their classroom for research, so the ages of the students were 6 to 10 years of age. One of the general education teachers and the special education teacher chose the same student, so the number of students who participated in the sample was five. Of the five students, 67.7% were in Special Education, one of the students received special education services 50% of the school day. Teachers and students participated in this study for 8 weeks (about 2 months) total (Briesch et al., 2020).

This study consisted of three major components. First teachers instructed students on their goals during the day (check-in system). Then the teachers gave feedback to students on a chart (DRC) at the end of each school day (check out system). During this check out time, Teachers instructed students on areas of behavioral improvement in a Tier 2 small group setting that resembles a social skills lesson on areas the student can improve upon (disruptive, oppositional, organizational skills, academic engagement, etc.). The teachers also praised areas of strength for the student. Next, a project consultant came into the classroom to complete weekly observation on the teacher's fidelity with the program and rated the teachers on how they were following through with the program's objectives. Finally, Direct Behavior Rating scales (completed by the teachers) were used to track the behavioral data of the students in the program (Briesch et al., 2020).

Results showed significant improvement in academic engagement and disruptive behavior in the students over the two-month period. Whereas the data for oppositional behavior and organizations skills were inconclusive. Although these students were at times still opposed and struggled in organization it was concluded that it could have been in part due to the two-month period. A longer duration of study in these areas of DBR and DRC with socio-emotional learning in oppositional behavior and organizations skills are needed. In conclusion, the study does show the treatment sensitivity of DBR and DRC in the classroom. Briesch et al. (2020) found the following results:

Although previous research supported the dependability of data obtained from the DBR-MIS Engagement and Disruptive scales, the current results provide strong evidence for the treatment sensitivity of the expanded versions of these scales, as well as promising evidence for the Oppositional and Organizational Skills constructs. (p. 41)

Researchers in the article, “A Brief Social Skills Intervention to Reduce Challenging Classroom Behavior,” set out to prove the significance of social skills instruction for the behavioral and academic improvement of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. According to Bruhn et al. (2016) study the following was found:

Challenging behaviors may lead to impaired social relationships with peers and adults, and worse, abysmal within-school and post-school outcomes. When compared to peers with other disabilities, students receiving special education services for EBD are more likely to fail courses be suspended and drop out of school. (p. 54)

According to research in 2016, 58% of students with EBD have been arrested at a minimum of one time post high school and 43% of these students will likely be on probation or parole (Bruhn et al., 2016).

Studies have shown that socio-emotional instruction, specifically teaching skills on self-regulation, following instructions, and working with others can help students improve upon their social competence. Social competence then allows students to become more academically engaged. On the other spectrum, students who do not exhibit appropriate social behavior display decreases in their academics. This study's purpose was to assess if the teaching of social skills curriculum in a small group can improve the behaviors and thus the academics of students with EBD. The *Stop and Think* social skill curriculum was developed for grades Pre-Kindergarten through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This curriculum is designed into four sections: (1) listening/following instruction, (2) interpersonal skills, (3) problem-solving skills, and (4) resolving conflict skills. Each lesson is broken up into a 5-step process; “role playing, providing performance feedback, and applying the skill” (Bruhn et al., 2016, p. 56).

The setting for this study was two K-12 alternative learning program for students in special education in two school districts located in the suburbs of the Southeast United States. There were five students in grades 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> that participated in this study. The first classroom had three students chosen for this program by their veteran educator teacher. The second classroom had two students selected by their teacher who had been teaching for the past 5 years. “Both classrooms served the same grade levels, followed the same schedule and school structure, and were served by the same therapeutic and educational services (i.e., social work, group therapy)” (Bruhn et al., 2016, p. 57). The students that were chosen for this study were nominated by their teachers because they had (a) a history of problem behaviors with peers and adults over the last two academic years, (b) social emotional/behavior issues that affected their learning and ability to ever back into the general education classroom, and (c) social behavior

issues that had not been corrected with traditional school wide positive behavior approaches and counseling services (Bruhn et al., 2016).

Observations were conducted to monitor the negative social behavior of the students for two weeks before SEL instruction to acquire an unbiased baseline. Observations were conducted throughout the study averaging three times a week to collect data on the NSB of students.

“Direct Observation of NSBs during academic instruction took place after social skills instructional sessions, which occurred on the same day” (Bruhn et al., 2016, p. 59). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was given to teachers, parents, and students before and after the study was completed to compare the behavioral ratings. Also, teachers and students completed a social validity questionnaire on the *Stop and Think* curriculum to assess if the way it was delivered was appropriate. The teachers in the study also participated in a two-hour training on the *Stop and Think* curriculum along with a timeline of how the lessons should be distributed (Bruhn et al., 2016).

Once the baseline was completed, the Stop and Think curriculum was introduced to students by daily social skills lessons for 30-minute per time three days a week and one-hour long session one time a week for three weeks. The students completed 5 full lessons during the three-week time frame. This social skills lesson was taught before any academic instruction was given. Results indicated that during the baseline phase 50 percent of students were demonstrating Negative Social Behavior (NSB). While the intervention was in place, all students in the program showed decreases in Negative Student Behavior and continued to stay low in numbers. The follow-up observation after the study showed that students continued to make positive behavioral choices. Results also showed improvement in positive behaviors and decreases in negative behaviors when evaluating the SDQ pre and post assessments. In conclusion, results

demonstrated that the *Stop and Think* curriculum may lead to increased positive social behaviors (Bruhn et al., 2016).

**Table 2***Summary of Findings: Small Group Interventions (SEL and Academics)*

Authors	Study Design	Participants	Procedure	Findings
Bierman, Sanders (2020)	Qualitative	Reviews previous research and studies on neurodevelopmental processes and constraints of students with EBD and socio-emotional development.	Reviews of research	Intensive Socio-emotional instruction in a TIER 2 setting of small group is beneficial for students with EBD to make gains towards social-emotional competencies. Implementing evidence-based practices is critical for the student to make gains in self-regulation, especially those with previous trauma.
Briesch, Owens, Volpe, Hustus, Daniels (2020)	Quantitative	Six elementary school teachers participated in this study.	Each of these six teachers completed a DRC intervention on one of the students from their classrooms, while using DBR's every school day for two months.	The results showed the DRC interventions were effective in decreasing target behaviors displayed by students. Also, these results served as proof that DBR-DRC intervention work when conducted with fidelity.
Bruhn, McDaniel, and Troughton (2016)	Qualitative	Review and examine literature on self-regulation skills, strategies, and interventions on goal setting for students with EBD.	Findings from 40 studies and 1,359 participants (mostly male and in elementary settings).	There is a concern of under identification in females and lack of reporting on outcomes of students in goal setting.

## **Curriculum in General Education and Special Education (Strategies for Self-Regulation/EBD)**

In my research, I found five articles that discuss how curriculum in general education and special education can promote strategies for self-regulation for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. These articles also explain teaching socio-emotional lessons in the general education classroom can improve academic skills, professional development for teachers is important for socio-emotional development in students, and how positive reinforcement and other strategies are equally important for academic success.

In the peer review article, “Classwide Teacher Implementation of Self-Regulated Strategy Development for Writing with Students with E/BD in a Residential Facility”, researchers Alberto et al. (2014) argue that students with Emotional and Behavioral disorder can improve their writing skills with the teaching of self-regulation strategies. In this article, researchers use the self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) alongside curriculum implementation of the STOP and DARE mnemonic methods to improve writing skills. According to Alberto et al. (2014) the study’s purpose was “to extend this line of inquiry to a residential setting with teachers serving as interventionists and determine the effects of the SRSD using the STOP and DARE mnemonic for persuasive writing on the writing performance and academic engagement” (p. 88).

Research that has been conducted throughout the years has concluded that students with EBD typically do more poorly than those of typically developing peers and those with other disabilities. As students with EBD continue through elementary, middle, and high school the support they receive in academic and behavioral areas becomes less in depth. “This suggests a need to improve school-based programs and curriculum to address both the academic and



behavioral needs of students with E/BD” (Alberto et al., 2014, p. 89). Writing is an academic area that is important as students go through school, post-secondary, and in their adult life. Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) is one way to ensure students with EBD can progress in their writing skills (Alberto et al., 2014).

SRSD is an evidence-based program that incorporates “a six-stage model of instruction: *Develop Background Knowledge, Discuss the Strategy, Model the Strategy, Memorize the Strategy, Support the Strategy, and Independent Performance*” (Alberto et al., 2014, p. 89). In this program there are opportunities for teaching behavioral strategies in the lessons. The SRSD mnemonic STOP and DARE were used in this study. STOP and DARE stands for: “Suspend judgement, Take a side, Organize ideas, and Plan more as you write; and Develop your topic sentence, Add supporting ideas, Reject at least one argument for the other side, and End with a conclusion” (Alberto et al., 2014, p. 90). There were three special education teachers and forty-four students chosen from a 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade residential school in an urban district located in the southeast of the United States. Students who participated in the study were currently participating in a Language Art class when the baseline was being conducted (Alberto et al., 2014).

“During the baseline phase, teachers led class wide writing instruction during the 50-min language arts period 2 days per week, Tuesday and Thursday” (Alberto et al., 2014, p. 96). Teachers had not yet been trained in the SRSD practices until after the baseline was conducted to ensure no biases. The baseline consisted of correct word sequences, essay quality, and essay elements for the academic portion and observation on academic engagement for socio-emotional portion. After the baseline was conducted, teachers participated in a two-hour long training session on the SRSD program being used in this research. During the intervention process,

instruction was held on the same days and times as the baseline (Tuesdays and Thursdays for 50 minutes a period for five weeks; Fridays were reserved for makeup days and testing). The writing intervention was taught using the SRSD mnemonic strategies of STOP and DARE. As stated previously, these writing strategies incorporate social-emotional learning and opportunities to use self-regulation strategies. Mastery was obtained when 80% of the students memorized the mnemonic of STOP and DARE (Alberto et al., 2014).

After reviewing the baseline, assessments during intervention, and assessments (CWS, Essay quality, and Essay elements) the intervention results concluded that there was an average of a 0.93 increase for Caucasian students and a 0.5 increase for African American and Hispanic students for the writing portion of the study. According to Alberto et al. (2014) the results were as the following:

For AE (academic engagement), an average student's initial AE was 50.35%, for every point increase over the mean age AE increased by 2.50% ( $p=0.003$ ) and the AE of students with internalizing behavior patterns was initially 10.57 % ( $p=0.006$ ) more engaged than students with externalizing behavior patterns. (pp. 103-104).

Each week during the intervention academic engagement in students had an increase of 6.88% ( $p=0.001$ ). In conclusion, the findings were productive with the purpose of the study in finding that self-regulation strategy developments can improve writing instruction to students with EBD when conducted with proper training of educators to implement the program with fidelity (Alberto et al., 2014).

Instructors report how one of the largest concerns in education today is the increase in behavior concerns such as, aggression in students, behaviors that disrupt the classroom instruction, and non-compliance of students. In the article by Algina et al. (2021), "Efficacy of

the social-emotional learning foundations curriculum for kindergarten and first grade students at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders,” evidence is provided of how social-emotional learning is imperative for academic success. The purpose of this study by Algina et al. (2021) was the following:

To evaluate the efficacy of the SELF curriculum as compared to a business as usual (BAU) control condition for children at risk for EBD in general education kindergarten and first grade classrooms under routine conditions, researchers conducted a three- year pretest-posttest cluster randomized efficacy trial. (p. 3)

One of the types of data of baseline and post-evaluation provided by researchers was pre and post-tests conducted by students. In this study, two interventions are compared with 627 kindergarteners and 527 first graders all identified as having emotional and behavioral disorders spanned out across 52 primary schools in 11 school districts. Social – Emotional Learning Foundations (SELF) is an intervention created by researchers that was used in this study by 613 students. SELF incorporates social-emotional learning with literacy instruction. Business As Usual (BAU) was another intervention that 541 participated in this study (Algina et al., 2021).

BAU intervention was strictly used for academic purposes and did not take social-emotional learning into account. In the SELF program SEL instruction such as self-regulation, decision making, relationship skills, managing stress, and positive self-perception was taught alongside academic (specifically literacy) instruction. Researchers concluded that the SELF instruction had a more positive experience and an uptick in academic results and self-perspectives in students than compared to that of the BAU intervention. They also made mention of the importance of school psychologists to help aide in the instruction of SEL and documentation purposes of how SEL is important for student success. Results indicated that

“SELF had a positive effect at posttest on self-regulation, SEL, general behavioral functioning, and SEL vocabulary” (Algina et al., 2021, p. 10).

In the peer review journal article, “SRSD in Practice: Creating a Professional Development Experience for Teachers to Meet the Writing Needs of Students with EBD,” researchers Fitzpatrick et al. (2014) reviewed eleven studies on self-regulation and writing. These eleven studies used their researchers as the teachers to implement the program. This qualitative study examined if self-regulation strategy development (SRSD) was an effective practice for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, particularly in writing, along with practice-based professional development (PBPD). PBPD has been successful in instructing teachers on how to incorporate SRSD with consistency and fidelity. Researchers combined SRSD and PBPD in a way that effectively incorporated lessons so that classroom teachers could implement the program and researchers could contrive the data and confer results (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014).

This study integrated data from separate sources. These sources consisted of, “(a) three teacher interviews, (b) previous publications about PBPD for SRSD, and (c) anecdotes collected across multiple PBPD implementations in public school settings that included teachers of students with EBD” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014, p. 15). Self-regulated strategy development has a 6-step process: “develop background knowledge, discuss it, model it, memorize it, support it, and independent performance” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014, p. 17). Practice-Based Professional Development is where teachers participate in a two-day training that includes the importance of being engaged with students, learning both the strengths and weaknesses of each student, assessing the teacher's knowledge and pedagogy, modeling and practicing the skills they have learned, using unbiased and consistent assessments during the entirety of the program, and

collecting feedback. When PBPD and SRSD are combined, it can be an effective tool in academic instruction, particularly students with EBD (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014).

When working with students with EBD, teachers focused on two factors: self-statements and behavior supports. “Self-statements address getting started, goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014, p. 23). Teachers model and use self-statements for students to promote self-talk. Since negative talk comes more naturally, positive self-talk must be taught. Positive behavior supports were used to promote desired behaviors of students. The behavior supports that were used were tickets that students could cash in for prizes. A support that was also used was behavior-specific praise in which teachers encouraged the behaviors of students that they would like to see (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014).

In their research, the authors found that the three groups previously stated had three outcomes of teachers (who participated in PBPD) and students. In one outcome, >85% of all teachers-maintained program for SRSD in writing. In the second study, 96% of teachers used the program with fidelity and students who participated improved their writing. In the third study, 96% of teachers used the program with fidelity and students who participated generally improved their writing. In conclusion, researchers believe that practice based professional development can be “successful at implementing SRSD writing strategies with a wide range of students, including students with EBD” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014, p. 24).

Over the last 5 decades, there has been a lot of research on EBD and emotional regulation due to persons with EBD often having struggles with self-regulation. Unfortunately, how to implement self-regulation strategies for students with EBD is still debated. The purpose of the qualitative article by French (2019), “Essential components of school-based intervention for students with emotional and behavioral disorders: An integration of research and practice,” is to

debate and examine current literature and studies on the topic through the lens of a practitioner. Researchers hope that this discussion will lead to the creation of highly effective interventions for schools.

This author researched one hundred seventeen sources on the topic of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders and self-regulation. In their research, French (2019) discovered four things to consider in successful interventions with students with EBD. One of the first things to consider is understanding that creating effective interventions for students with EBD can be challenging and take a considerable amount of time. Another fundamental consideration that needs to be addressed is that special education teachers should receive specialized training in behavior management for interventions to be successful. It is also important for teachers who work with students who have EBD to have interpersonal skills. Teachers need to develop relationships with students positively and not take things too personally when working with students with EBD. Finally, it is important to consider that punitive punishments would not be heavily relied upon (French, 2019).

Eight crucial important strategies are presented in this research article. One important strategy is “the process of providing students with clearly defined expectations for behavior, monitoring their behavior, and delivering reinforcement in response to the performance of the behavior is the bedrock of classroom management for students with EBD” (French, 2019, p. 373). Another strategy that is important is to have consistent routine and structure. “Students with EBD benefit from this approach, in part, because it minimizes opportunities for disruptive behavior and provides a sense of security for students” (French, 2019, p.373). Thirdly, researchers found that breaks are important for students with EBD to take while involved in any academic engagement for a period of time. Sustained concentration for long periods of time can

elevate heightened emotions. Fourthly, it has been well documented that social skills instruction can be an effective intervention in teaching self-regulation strategies for them to learn how to self-regulate their emotions in all settings. Teaching self-regulation strategies in all settings in the fifth strategy considered in this study (French, 2019).

Positive reinforcement is the sixth strategy to be implemented with students with EBD. Positive reinforcement consists of praising the behavior that teachers desire to see in their students, instead of punitive punishment. Many students with EBD struggle with low self-esteem, it is important to build relationships and confidence by using positive reinforcements. Crisis intervention is a must for students with EBD, which is why it is the sixth strategy in this research. It is essential that staff and students remain safe during crisis interventions when the students' emotions are heightened. Finally, “parent involvement in a child’s education has long been linked to the child’s success in school” (French, 2019, p. 378). It is especially important for the school and parents of students with EBD to establish a positive reinforcement. It has been reported that parents of students with EBD feel much of the communication between schools and parents is negative. Research shows the importance of establishing positive relationships between parents and schools (French, 2019).

This research concludes with the importance of the four considerations and eight strategies mentioned above through the lens of a practitioner. In order to implement these strategies, “achieving a consensus among researchers and practitioners will be important to optimize training efforts, direct resources, and advance best practice in schools” (French, 2019, p. 378). In order to see intervention being used effectively for students with EBD in schools it is important that continued research in these strategies and implementations be completed by practitioners and educators (French, 2019).

In the quantitative study, “*How Am I Doing?*” Teaching Children with Emotional-Behavioral Disorders to Self-Manage Their Behaviors,” authors Mahdavi et al., (2018) study the effects of “applied behavior analysis and sensorimotor regulation....in students with EBD” (Mahdavi et al., 2018, p. 91). External support in the classroom is useful when used properly but should not be the sole support for controlling external behaviors in students with EBD. Educators and physicians agree that these supports do not generalize into other areas of their lives such as the community, home life, etc. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of “internal strategies that students with EBD can use independently in the community” (Mahdavi et al., 2018, p. 91).

The socio-emotional skills that educators in this article are trying to instill in children with EBD are self-determination, self-management, and self-regulation skills. Students with EBD often lack the skills to be successful in these areas. In the classroom, external support is provided for the student to be successful, but internal support is often not a factor. In this study, two special education teachers used evidence-based practices encouraging self-management and self-regulation strategies. Both teachers used direct explicit instruction, self-monitoring checklists, clear classroom rules and procedures, student-direct learning, and social validity (Mahdavi et al., 2018).

One teacher of kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students with EBD used the curriculums *The Alert Program* (Williams & Shellenberger, 1996), *The Zones of Regulation*, and *Superflex* (Madrigal & Garcia Winner, 2008) to create an atmosphere of understanding each of their feelings and encouraging students to express their feelings in an appropriate manner using tools from the curriculums that were being taught. The *Zones* help children identify their feelings by teaching them to match their feelings by the color and facial expression of how they feel in the



inside (red-angry, blue- sad, green- happy, and yellow- silly/worried). *Superflex* is a curriculum that uses self-management, self-reliance, and self-control that come in the form of superhero-like characters that help defeat the bad thoughts/actions or the unthinkable as they are described in the lessons (Mahdavi et al., 2018).

Another special education teacher in this study taught 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students of EBD students who “chose an applied behavior analytic approach (ABA) to teaching replacements or incompatible behaviors that could be appropriately used in place of the behaviors they typically engaged in for attention or escape” (Mahdavi et al., 2018, p. 94). The teacher and the paraprofessionals used roleplaying with the students to engage in learning of socio-emotional skills. First the teachers and paraprofessionals would role play the off task and disruptive behaviors and students would play the teachers who would be bringing down the situation. Then the students would play the disruptive behaviors and para’s and teachers would play the teacher role (Mahdavi et al. 2018).

Both teachers taught their socio-emotional skills lessons in their own ways. Also, both teachers taught their socio-emotional curriculums with unrelenting fidelity and saw productive results in their students. They reported seeing more prosocial behavior in their students in their classrooms and during unstructured times such as recess, specials, lunch, etc. The kindergarten/ first grade teacher also reported that parents were implementing these same strategies with their children and there was improvement at home as well. In conclusion, explicit instruction, clear and consistent communication, the teaching of self-regulation strategies, and students being able to use and understand them intrinsically is important for students' socio-emotional and academic growth (Mahdavi et al., 2018).

**Table 3***Summary of Findings: Curriculum in GEN-ED and SPED*

Authors	Study Design	Participants	Procedure	Findings
Alberto, Jolivet, Terry, Fredrick, Ennis (2014)	Quantitative	44 (5 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> grade) students in language arts classes. Three highly qualified special education teachers implementing the SRSD.	Implemented SRSD in their classrooms to students with EBD. SRSD has six stages of instruction: Develop Background Knowledge Discuss the Strategy Model the Strategy Memorize the Strategy Support the Strategy Independent Performance	Results indicated that implementing SRSD into writing curriculum at least two days a week and implementing SRSD with fidelity can improve the behaviors and academics of students with EBD.
Algina, Corbett, Smith, Daunic, Poling, Worth, Boss, Crews, Vezzoli (2021)	Quantitative	627 Kindergarteners and 527 First Graders all identified with EBD 163 Kindergarten Teachers and 141 First Grade Teachers	Implemented the Social-Emotional Learning Foundations (SELF) intervention in their classrooms. This intervention combines social-emotional learning and literacy instruction in the classroom.	Teaching the SELF curriculum to students had a positive impact on the student's socio-emotional well-being, self-regulation strategies, and literacy comprehension.
FitzPatrick, McKeown, Sandmel (2014)	Qualitative	11 studies on students with EBD and self-regulation strategies (SRSD)	Review of Studies	Self-Regulated strategy development (SRSD) is an effective writing intervention and has been beneficial for students with EBD. Professional Development in how to teach SRSD has also been effective. Ways to improve SRSD is volunteering PD towards SRSD, timing and group size should be taken into account as well.
French (2019)	Qualitative	There has been a lot of research over the last 5 decades on EBD and emotional regulation, but how to implement self-regulation strategies for students with EBD is still debated. This article debates and examines current literature and studies on the topic.	Review of Studies	This article provides examples on how to implement strategies with success such as train teachers, interpersonal skills of the teacher, and avoid relying on punishment consequences. Parent collaboration is effective.
Mahdavi, Tensfeldt, and Verroulx (2018)	Quantitative	One teacher with kindergarten and 1 grade students (Students with EBD in the classrooms). One middle grade teacher with 5 <sup>th</sup> through 9 <sup>th</sup> grade students (Students with EBD in the classrooms).	Evidence-based practices encouraging self-management and self-regulation strategies were used: Direct Explicit Instruction Self-Monitoring Checklists Clear Classroom Rules and Procedures Student-Direct Learning Social Validity	Explicit instruction, clear and consistent communication, the teaching of self-regulation strategies, and students being able to use and understand them intrinsically is important for students' socio-emotional and academic growth.

### **Chapter 3: Conclusions and Summary**

This paper aims to research and review the correlation between teaching self-regulation skills and its effect on academics in students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Furthermore, risk factors for EBD and self-regulation, social-emotional and academic small group interventions, curriculum in special education and general education for teaching self-regulation strategies for students with EBD were also considered. There is a brief introduction to the history of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Special Education, and Socio-emotional learning in Chapter 1 along-with definitions related to EBD and SEL. Chapter 2 contains article summaries of twelve peer-reviewed articles and studies relating to the question explained in this research. The twelve peer-reviewed articles were divided up into three categories based on what the articles were explained above. In conclusion, Chapter 3 articulates the conclusions from the scholarly article's findings, recommendations for future research, implications for current and future research, and a summary of findings.

#### **Conclusions**

There has been an increase in research on Socio-Emotional Learning in the last twenty years, but especially in the last ten years it has become increasingly popular. Educators, Physicians, and Researchers are witnessing the effects of instructing the whole child and the benefits socio-emotional learning has on academics in students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders as well.

#### ***Risk Factors for EBD and Self-Regulation***

The research article in Chapter 2 by Balart et al. (2021) is the only quantitative study from Table 1 (Risk Factors for EBD and Self-Regulation), except Kulkarni and Sullivan (2019) who conducted both a qualitative and quantitative study. This article by Balart et al. (2021) expresses how students with a history of trauma (parental abuse or neglect, family trauma) have

a high rate of identification of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, especially males. The article points out that there is a concerning amount of an over identification of males with EBD (Balart et al., 2021). The article by Kulkarni and Sullivan (2019) is conducted with a qualitative (longitudinal study) and a quantitative study. Findings in this study suggest that IEP's written for students with EBD should be reflective of a trauma-informed perspective and could be more effective than a legal perspective. These researchers also noted in their study results that students with EBD who have needs in academics also struggle with peer and adult relationships, self-regulation, and internal/external physical functioning (Kulkarni & Sullivan, 2019).

Buxton (2018) is a qualitative (exploratory study) that confirmed research given on the effects of Emotional Disturbance and a history of trauma. Results in this study indicated that every student on an IEP that was reviewed for this case experienced needs with self-regulation, academics, and poor relationships due to the trauma-based background of the students (Buxton, 2018). The article by Lambert et al. (2021) is another qualitative study that examined Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scales of students with and without EBD. These results concluded that students with EBD who have had a history of trauma significantly had socio-emotional needs in self-regulation (Lambert et al., 2021).

### ***Social-Emotional and Academic Small Group Interventions***

In table 2 of Chapter 2, there is one quantitative study conducted by Briesch et al. (2020) where the participants consisted of six elementary school teachers who completed a DRC intervention and collected DBR's every school day. The results in this study indicated by the data from the DBR's that students were displaying a decrease in target behaviors due to the DRC interventions being highly effective. This study also noted that these interventions must be conducted with fidelity to be effective (Briesch et al., 2020). In the qualitative study by Bierman

and Sanders (2020), research was reviewed of neurodevelopmental process of students with EBD and self-regulation (SEL). Results indicated that intensive SEL TIER 2 small group instruction is highly effective for students with EBD to view progress in self-regulations and relationships skills of students with EBD (Bierman & Sanders, 2020). In the last article of table 2 of chapter 2 Bruhn et al. (2016) conducts a qualitative study on current self-regulation skills, strategies, and interventions of setting goals with students with EBD. Results indicated that there is a concerning amount of under-identification of females with EBD compared to males being identified with EBD and goal settings interventions for these students (Bruhn et al., 2016).

***Curriculum in Special Education and General Education (Strategies for Self-Regulation and EBD)***

Chapter 2 includes five more articles based on the curriculum in SPED and GED for strategies for self-regulation. In the quantitative study by Alberto et al. (2014), forty-four teachers of students with EBD implemented a self-regulated strategy development for writing. Results indicated that incorporating an SRSD into an academic curriculum such as writing can decrease target behaviors and improve desired outcomes of academics and socio-emotional development (Alberto et al., 2014). Another quantitative study by Algina et al. (2021) examined the implementation of SEL curriculum called SELF into the classroom and its impact on the students in their EBD classrooms. Three hundred four teachers participated in this study with 1,154 kindergarten and first-grade students. The results concluded that implementing the SELF curriculum into the classroom's academic curriculum had a positive impact on the students. Teachers saw an increase in positive behaviors such as self-regulation strategies, socio-emotional well-being, and literacy comprehension. Teachers also noticed a decrease in target behaviors like lack of self-control and negative peer relationships (Algina et al., 2021).

The last quantitative study was completed by Mahdavi et al. (2018), this study also included kindergarten and first-grade students with one teacher. It also included 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> students with one middle school teacher. Both classrooms consisted of students with EBD. In this study, teachers incorporated evidence-based practices on teaching self-regulation and self-monitoring. Students used a Direct Explicit Instruction Self-Monitoring Checklist alongside clear expectations of classroom rules. Results indicated growth in students' academics when being taught self-regulation strategies with fidelity in the classroom (Mahdavi et al., 2018).

Two more studies were reviewed for Chapter 2 and the table three portion of Curriculum in General Education and Special Education. Both qualitative studies reviewed previous studies in areas of instructing teachers how to properly incorporate self-regulation strategies into the classroom. In the study of FitzPatrick et al. (2014), eleven studies of students with EBD and self-regulation strategies Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD) were reviewed. Results indicated that using self-regulated strategy development to promote writing skills is an effective intervention for students with EBD. Teachers must also be trained in the SRSD during a Professional Development training to properly implement the program. Continued research should be completed on SRSD in the classrooms for continued program improvement (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). The last qualitative article was authored by French (2019), in which this researcher debates current literature and studies on emotional regulation and EBD. In conclusion, he discovered a common theme in the literature that he reviewed. This researcher goes into detail on how to implement self-regulation strategies properly such as professional development for teachers, relationship skills of the teacher, and avoiding a heavy reliance on punishment consequences. He also states that communication and parent collaboration is crucial for self-regulation skills to improve in students with EBD (French, 2019).

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

After analyzing the scholarly articles in connection with Self-Regulation Strategies and Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, continued research is needed in a few areas. One area is the under-representation of females with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in the school system identification process and the over-representation of males with EBD. Many scholarly articles included predominantly male participants due to the lack of under identification of females with EBD. More research needs to be completed on why females are underrepresented in the area of EBD and what can be done about this underrepresentation.

Another area of needed research that was common throughout the scholarly articles was more research based on IEP's being written from a medical viewpoint instead of a legal viewpoint. The article "Essential Components of School-Based Intervention for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: An Integration of Research and Practice," by French (2019), was chosen for this research paper because of the pertinent information it gives on individuals writing the IEPs from a medical viewpoint verses a legal viewpoint. There is more research to be done in this area.

As noted in this paper, Social Emotional Learning has become exceedingly popular within the last two decades. There has been increasing socio-emotional learning in the general education classroom and small group general and special education settings. Regrettably, there has not been as much research on how Social-Emotional Learning can impact the lives of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Thus, due to the lack of proper research on the effects of SEL on students with EBD, there is a barrier as to what students can attain regarding relationship and socio-emotional skills and how developing these can improve their academics. This barrier could also be due to the lack of research on Emotional and Behavioral

Disorders, even though there has been an increase in diagnosis and identifications in the last 20 years there is still much more research to be done in comparison with other disability categories.

Finally, the last common theme throughout these research articles was the lack of proper professional development among educators regarding socio-emotional (specifically self-regulation strategies) implementation into the classroom. Due to the lack of training on how to implement these strategies educators struggle with following through with self-management in the classroom. For these programs to be successful teachers need to first be educated in how to implement them in the classroom and prepared for barriers that they may encounter. Educating teachers on SEL programs and how they work with fidelity is important to see progress in students with EBD.

### **Implications for Current and Future Practice**

Teaching Socio-Emotional skills to students is meant to improve the child's socio-emotional skills, self-management skills, relationship skills, and increase positive self-esteem, thus in turn making gains towards their academics. As a special education teacher who not only case manages students with EBD, but also teaches socio-emotional learning, I can see the effects of socio-emotional learning on students with EBD. Consequently, my research for this paper has taught me the increasing importance of teaching socio-emotional learning, especially in self-regulation to students with EBD. Throughout my research, deficits of self-regulation were very apparent in students with EBD. I learned how crucial it is to properly teach socio-emotional learning with fidelity.

As a social skills special education teacher, I learned how important it is to use high quality curriculum that is taken from evidence-based research. Teaching this curriculum with



vigor and enthusiasm also increases student interest in the content. It is also equally important while teaching social skills to develop a relationship with each child, showing your care for their academics and who they are as a person. In our district, students who receive socio-emotional and behavior services in Special Education in a TIER 2 small group setting receive these skills twice a week for twenty-five minutes a time. Consistently teaching socio-emotional skills with fidelity will ensure students to generalize these new skills into all areas of their life.

According to my research, I learned that social skills instruction should be implemented into the general education curriculum to support the “whole child.” For my students with EBD, SEL instruction in the classroom (TIER 1) would help aid them in generalizing the skills they are learning in the small group setting (TIER 2). In the school district that I work for students receive SEL instruction at least once a week in their classrooms delivered by their teachers. The district also provides a TIER 2 setting on general education small group social skills for students who need additional SEL instruction. In my research, I learned the importance of professional development in the areas of teaching high quality SEL curriculum to all students, but especially students with EBD. In the three years that I have worked for this district, there has been no professional development centered around how to properly teach Socio-Emotional Learning. This paper has taught me the importance of Professional Development, and I will encourage my district to implement it.

In conclusion, as a special education teacher of EBD, this paper has taught me the reality of what the future could hold for my students. “In the year 2024, federal studies have shown that the number has increased to 73% of students with EBD will end up incarcerated within five years of dropping out of school” (American Civil Liberties Union, 2024, para. 1). This percentage is astounding, and it has become a realization for me through this research how

important teaching life skills such as self-regulation is for our students. In addition to lack of proper SEL instruction, there is a high percentage of students with EBD that have a history of trauma (emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, parent incarceration, family trauma, etc.) by the time they enter middle school. With this new knowledge, I believe schools should work together with parents and build socio-emotional skills to aid the students and the parents. Together, parents and teachers can come along side each other and help break the cycle of poor relationship skills, low self- control, low academic achievement, and high percentage of likelihood to prison for students with EBD.

In my research, I found the CASEL website especially beneficial in learning additional research on Socio-Emotional Learning, specifically self-regulation. CASEL, which stands for Collaborative Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, is a valuable resource for educators who teach socio-emotional skills or would like to incorporate SEL into their curriculum. This program has resources not only for educators desiring to increase their knowledge of how to teach SEL, but also how to incorporate parents and families into teaching SEL standards to their children. The relationship between home and school is crucial in preventing students from becoming incarcerated as young adults. The pipeline to prison website is also a reliable source for educators to increase their understanding and role in the pipeline to prison system. Educators will gain valuable insight from both programs to practice for their students.

### **Summary**

Recent studies have shown that teaching self-regulation skills can increase self-control, establish positive peer relationships, and gain confidence in students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders thus in turn increasing their academic success. Students in special education with behavior goals, such as a student with EBD, often will receive SEL instruction in

a small group setting. Research has shown the importance of SEL instruction in the general education curriculum to aid in generalizing these skills. Both settings should be taught with fidelity using highly effective curriculum with evidence-based strategies by teachers who have had professional development training on SEL. Research has shown that students with EBD have a high likelihood of being incarcerated within five years after dropping out of school. Students with EBD drop out due to the difficulties of keeping up with academic rigor and lack of self-regulation. Often students with EBD have had a history of childhood trauma and this can aid in poor decision making, lack of self-regulation, poor relationships skills, and deficits in academics. Teaching specific self-regulation strategies with a highly effective evidence-based curriculum can increase self-regulation, improve academics, and better the “whole child.”

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