Preservice Physical Education Teachers’ Perceptions toward Teaching Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders in a General Education Setting

by

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(ABSTRACT)

By law, physical education (PE) teachers must provide direct service to children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, which, whenever feasible, is a regular PE class. Traditionally, the adapted physical education (APE) specialist was responsible for teaching students with severe disabilities and the PE teacher was responsible for teaching students with mild disabilities. Today, however, many students with disabilities must be taught in a regular PE setting minimizing the need for the APE specialist. Now PE teachers are having to teach all students with disabilities, but some teacher preparation programs are not providing preservice teachers with opportunities to work with these students before their student teaching experience. A qualitative study was conducted to investigate preservice PE teachers’ in-class experiences teaching students with emotional/ behavioral disorders (EBD) in a general education setting. Multiple interviews and observations were conducted with four preservice teachers throughout the span of their student teaching experience to examine their thoughts, feelings, and concerns about teaching students with EBD as well as examining their interactions with these students. The participants indicated that in order to feel more qualified to teach students with EBD, they needed more experience. Further, they struggled with issues of inclusion while they encountered a gamut of emotions throughout their experiences. These findings point to the need to enhance preservice PE teachers’ experiences with more related fieldwork.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study

Statement of the Problem

The advent of inclusion has led to an increasing number of students with disabilities being included in general education settings. In turn, these students are being placed in regular physical education classes (Block, 1994). In the past, regular physical education teachers taught students with mild to moderate disabilities while the adapted physical education specialist taught students with severe and profound disabilities. Regular physical education teachers are now expected to teach all students with disabilities (Folsom-Meek, Nearing, & Krampf, 1995a). However, regular physical education teachers are not prepared “to provide individualized, appropriate physical education programs for students with disabilities” (Block, 1994, p. ix). Generally, regular physical education teachers have little preservice training or experience with students with disabilities because of the limitations in the total number of courses within an undergraduate program (Folsom-Meek et al., 1995a). Limitations may include the total number of required courses designed to prepare students to adequately and comfortably include students with disabilities. In most colleges and universities, students who are preparing to become physical education teachers have to take only one required special education course, which is adapted physical education (APE) (Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996).

The APE course typically lasts for one semester, depending on the college or university. Several topics are covered in the APE course such as: an introduction to different types of disabilities, the public laws identifying and teaching students with disabilities, individual education programs (IEPs), mainstreaming, inclusion, and curricular and instructional modifications, as well as other relevant topics. Depending on each individual college or university, field experiences are not necessarily a part of these APE courses. Unfortunately, once the APE course is completed, preservice physical education teachers may not encounter other necessary topics or have opportunities for field experiences to gain exposure to special needs children in other physical education teacher education (PETE) courses. Many preservice physical education teachers may not experience special needs children until they begin their student teaching experience. This often results in “frustrated, resentful physical educators who
have negative attitudes toward including students with disabilities in their regular physical education programs [e.g., Aloia, Knutson, Minner, & Von Seggern, 1980]” (Block, 1994, p. ix).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of preservice physical education teachers toward students with emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD) in a general education setting.

**Research Questions**

The following questions guided this research study:

1. What thoughts, feelings, and concerns do preservice physical education teachers have regarding teaching students with emotional/behavioral disorders in a general education setting and how do their thoughts, feelings, and concerns change over time?
2. How do preservice physical education teachers interact with students with emotional/behavioral disorders in the classroom/gymnasium and how do their experiences change over time?

**Definitions of Terms**

1. *Preservice Physical Education Teacher* refers to undergraduate students majoring in Physical Education who were enrolled in a sixteen-week student teaching practicum at secondary and elementary schools, preparing to become K-12 physical education teachers. Preservice teachers and student teachers may be used interchangeably throughout the study.
2. *Emotional/Behavioral Disorder* The IDEA ‘97 definition uses the term emotional disturbance to describe children with behavioral or emotional disorders and defines emotional disturbance as follows:
   - The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:
     - A. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
     - B. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
     - C. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
     - D. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
E. A tendency to develop physical symptoms of fears associated with personal or school problems.

F. The term includes children who are schizophrenic. The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 12422).

3. **General Education Setting** encompasses the variety of school facilities in which physical education teachers teach.

**Significance of the Proposed Study**

Despite the interest in identifying preservice teachers’ attitudes toward disabilities, it is surprising that very little qualitative research has actually been conducted on this topic. Very few, if any, of the current studies investigate preservice teachers’ perceptions and experiences beyond that of the Physical Educators’ Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities (PEATID-III) survey instrument. This study of preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions toward teaching students with EBD in a general education setting can add another dimension to the attitude survey through in-depth interviews seeking the perceptions of preservice physical education teachers. The additional dimension of this study may serve to add a different perspective on attitudes and perceptions preservice physical education teachers hold toward EBD students. By expanding the research through exploring the experiences of preservice physical education teachers, university researchers and teacher trainers may be better able to identify the needs of preservice teachers working with students with EBD and also better understand the factors that influence teachers’ perceptions. In addition, this study serves to inform university researchers and teacher trainers about potential concerns held by preservice physical education teachers that need to be addressed during the undergraduate teacher training process.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

To understand how preservice physical education teachers perceive students with EBD in a general education setting, the following chapter provides a review of the related literature. This review is important in laying the groundwork for this study.

Public Law 94-142

Public Law (PL) 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) is a federal law passed in 1975 mandating that schools implement appropriate educational programs for students with disabilities. This legislation required that students with disabilities would be educated with their nondisabled peers as much as possible. Since 1975, PL 94-142 has been reauthorized several times. The 1986 reauthorization mandated services for children with disabilities from birth to 5 years of age as well as services provided to the entire family. In the 1990 reauthorization, the word handicap was replaced by the word disability and EHA was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to reflect current “person-first” language (e.g., a person with a disability). Furthermore, two separate categories were created for autism and traumatic brain injury and schools had to develop a transitional plan for students who were going to turn 16 years of age or older (and students as young as 14 years of age). The 1990 and 1997 reauthorizations of PL 94-142 require states and local schools to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public educational program in the least restrictive environment (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2001).

Essential Components

PL 94-142, most recently reauthorized as IDEA 1997, implemented some essential components from the legislation. IDEA requires schools to incorporate nondiscriminatory assessment. Before students can be eligible for services in special education, schools are required to test students “in a way that does not discriminate against them because of race, socio-economic, or language factors” (Smith et al., 2001, p. 14). When students become eligible for services in special education, IDEA also requires that schools provide related services to meet the needs of those students. Such services include therapy (physical, occupational, speech, vision, therapeutic recreation), counseling (rehabilitation), transportation, and audiology if needed (Block, 1994; Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 1999; Smith et al., 2001).
Another requirement of IDEA is due process safeguards. One safeguard is due process rights, which means that parents and schools have an equal amount of input on the educational program for their child. Before schools make specific changes to a student’s educational program, they are required to obtain parental consent. If there is a disagreement between the parents and the school about the educational program, a due process hearing can be requested by either group. This hearing is where the parents or the school “present evidence and testimony to an impartial hearing officer who decides on the appropriateness of an educational program” (Smith et al., 2001, p. 16).

IDEA also requires that students with disabilities be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE is defined as:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schools, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Federal Register, 1993, August 23, p. 42497)

LRE results in the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. The student’s individual education program (IEP) will determine the amount of time the student spends in a general education setting. IDEA requires that all children who receive special education services must have an IEP (Smith, et al., 2001). The IEP is “the vehicle for delivering a free and appropriate public education to every eligible student with a disability in a written statement” (Hardman et al., 1999, p. 26). The concept behind an IEP is to provide students with disabilities with the best possible educational program, which meets their individual needs. In addition to the IEP concept, the LRE concept means that all general education teachers will be involved with students with disabilities (Smith et al., 2001).

Inclusion

From 1950 to 1970, students with disabilities were educated in self-contained classrooms away from general education teachers and students without disabilities. This isolation from teachers and students paved the road to mainstreaming students with disabilities in general education classes. The road to mainstreaming is a result of civil rights laws, court cases,
educational laws, and parental advocacy groups (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Smith, et al., 2001).

**Civil Rights**

Before the 1950s, students of color (such as African American children) were educated in separate schools apart from white (Caucasian) students. The civil rights movement addressed this situation of segregated public schools because of race discrimination. *Brown v. the Board of Education* was the first court case to address discrimination in public schools (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Smith, et al., 2001; Stainback, Stainback & Ayers, 1996). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it was unlawful to “discriminate against any group of people” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999, p. 6). The Supreme Court also ruled that “a separate education for African American students could not be an equal education” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999, p. 6). Although this specific court case did not address students with disabilities, it opened the door for parents who have children with disabilities. Children were being refused access into schools because of their disabilities and parents began to push for equal rights for their children (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Smith, et al., 2001; Stainback, Stainback & Ayers, 1996).

**Court Cases**

Several court cases have developed over the years since *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. In the 1970s, Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) represented a group of parents whose children were denied access to public education because of their disability, which was mental retardation. The court ruled that children with mental retardation may not be excluded from public education. During the same time period as the case of *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, another case was fighting for the right for children with mental retardation to access public schools in Washington D.C., *Mills v. District of Columbia*. The court ruled that not only should children with mental retardation be given the right to a free public education, but also the ruling was extended to include all students with disabilities (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Smith, et al., 2001).

In the 1980s, several cases were taken to the U.S. Supreme Court on services and placement of students with disabilities. One case was *Henry Hudson School District v. Rowley*, which involved the school providing a sign language interpreter for a student for one year and not the next. Previous ruling from the due process hearing officer and federal district court ruled in favor of the parents stating that “a sign language interpreter was needed to maximize the
student’s educational achievement” (Smith et al., 2001, p. 18). The U.S. Supreme Court overruled this decision in light of PL 94-142, which does not intend for school systems to “maximize” the education of students with disabilities but to make available a free appropriate education (Smith et al., 2001, p. 18). In the case of Larry P. v. Riles, the court ruled it was discriminatory for African American students to be placed in special education programs based on their IQ scores. In the case of Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education, the court ruled that the school system did not violate Daniel’s rights when he was removed from general education. The school system decided to remove Daniel from general education after an attempt to include him became unsuccessful (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Smith, et al., 2001; Stainback, Stainback & Ayers, 1996).

In the 1990s, court cases relevant to special education revolved mainly around the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. Oberti v. Board of Education of Clementon School District consisted of a student, Rafael, with Down syndrome, being placed in a special education classroom for students with mild mental retardation until the school system decided he was ready to be included in a general education classroom. The court ruled that the school system must first consider placing students with disabilities in a general education setting, with the use of additional aids and services before investigating a more restrictive setting. Sacramento City Unified School District v. Holland involved the placement of a student, Rachel, who was labeled as moderately mentally retarded. Rachel’s placement consisted of half of her time spent in non-academic general education classes and the other half spent in special education classes. The court ruled that Rachel should be placed in general education classes full time with appropriate services. This is a landmark case for full inclusion of students with disabilities in a general education setting (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Smith, et al., 2001; Stainback, Stainback & Ayers, 1996). Court cases continue to play a strong role in the issue of including students with disabilities in general education settings.

Parental Advocacy Groups

Parents have become educational advocates when it comes to including their children with disabilities in a general education setting. Parents have been involved with trying to make sure that school systems provide appropriate educational services for children with disabilities. They have pulled together to break down the barriers that have denied access to public education and educating students with disabilities in a general education setting (Smith et al., 2001).
Controversial Inclusion

Historically, students with disabilities have been educated in special education classrooms separate from general education classes in the public school. Special education classrooms contained specially trained teachers who worked one on one with students with disabilities. However, times have changed since IDEA has mandated that students with disabilities be provided with an appropriate education in a LRE whenever feasible. In other words, students with disabilities will be educated in general education classrooms with the additional aids and services necessary to meet their individual needs. This has caused many debates over the years of including students with disabilities in general education settings. There are two main arguments in the inclusion debate. However, in order to discuss these two arguments, it is important to first understand the meaning of inclusion (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Safford & Safford, 1998; Smith, et al., 2001).

Inclusion was derived from the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The REI model was created from the continued efforts for inclusive placements (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987). Its goal was to fully include students with disabilities in general education programs by merging special education and general education together (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Smith, et al., 2001). The REI was basically “a special education initiative for high-incidence disabilities (i.e., Mild Mentally Retarded, Learning Disabled, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders)” that had average success in changing special education but not general education (Kavale & Forness, 2000, p. 283). In the course of inclusion, REI fell to the way side because of its “limited influence on general education” (Kavale & Forness, 2000, p. 283). Unfortunately, REI used the term full inclusion which suggested that, regardless of how severe the disability, all students with disabilities should be included full time in general education settings (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994-1995; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Smith et al., 2001). The Association for the Severely Handicapped (TASH) and Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) supported this approach to placing all students with disabilities in a general education setting full time (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Smith et al., 2001). Their support and encouragement “resulted in a great deal of criticism and skepticism” (Smith et al., 2001, p. 25).

Currently, the term inclusion is used to “identify the movement to provide services to students with disabilities in general education settings” (Smith et al., 2001, p. 25). The two groups on either side of the inclusion debate are divided by their philosophies about how much
time students with disabilities should be included in general education settings. On one side, there are those (such as, Lipsky & Gartner, 1992) who argue that all students with disabilities belong in a general education setting almost all the time (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). On the other side, there are those (such as, Kauffman, 1995) who argue that only under certain conditions should students with disabilities belong in a general education setting (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). For those who support inclusion, there are several points in favor of including students with disabilities. One point is that inclusion will help foster positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Another point is that inclusion will help students without disabilities understand differences and diversity. An additional point is that inclusion can help avoid the harmful effects of exclusion (for example, a student who leaves a general education class to go to a special education class may be stigmatized by her classmates). The last point is that inclusion will help facilitate growth in social and academic skills among students with disabilities (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Lipsky & Gartner, 1992; Sailor, 1991; Smith et al., 2001; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; Stainback, Stainback & Ayers, 1996).

In contrast, there are those who believe that inclusion should occur only when it is appropriate for the child. They offer several arguments in favor of this position. One point is that inclusion may not fit the needs of all students with disabilities and alternatives need to be available for those students whose needs cannot be met in a general education setting and the law still says that we have a continuum of services. Another point is that in some instances general education teachers do not possess the appropriate skills for working with and accommodating the needs of students with disabilities. In addition to the lack of skills that some general education teachers possess, classroom size and pressures of academic standards can prevent some students with disabilities to learn because of the lack of individualized needs being met. Lastly, sufficient services for students with disabilities and general education teachers are not always available in an inclusive setting because of insufficient funds or the attempt to save money in the schools (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Hardman et al., 1999; Sailor, 1991; Smith et al., 2001). Regardless of one’s position in the inclusion debate, it should be recognized that the goal of inclusion is to provide students with disabilities the most appropriate education based on their individual needs (Friend & Bursuck, 1999; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Smith et al., 2001).
Inclusion and Students with EBD

The controversy of inclusion and students with EBD has long been discussed (Kauffman & Smucker, 1995; Lewis, Chard, & Scott, 1994; MacMillan, Gresham, & Forness, 1996; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). Proponents of inclusion believe that all students with disabilities should be educated in a general education setting regardless of their disability. This raises several issues in the discussion of educating students with EBD. One of these issues is that the needs of all students with EBD are not being met by including them in general education settings (MacMillan et al., 1996). This brings about the argument of “one size fits all” in the case of inclusion of students with disabilities (MacMillan et al., 1996, p. 150). The placement of students with disabilities does not fall under the same educational setting for each individual. IDEA states that students with disabilities should be placed in the LRE, however, the placement must be based on the student’s IEP, which revolves around his/her individual needs. So, the placement of students with EBD will be based on their individual needs and what is specified in their IEP (Kauffman & Smucker, 1995; Lewis et al., 1994; MacMillan et al., 1996; Smith et al., 2001). “A continuum of alternative instructional settings is fundamental to individualized placements based on IEPs” (Lewis et al., 1994, p. 280). This continuum of alternative instructional settings includes general education classes, special education classes, special schools, instruction at home, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (Lewis, et al., 1994; Smith et al., 2001). Lewis et al. (1994) explain that students with EBD should meet their objectives in their IEP first and their placement should be considered second in order to meet the objectives of the IEP.

Another issue in the education of students with EBD is the lack of research on inclusion and students with EBD. Proponents of full inclusion believe that all students with disabilities should be educated in a general education setting regardless of the severity of and/or nature of their disability (MacMillan et al., 1996). Full inclusion is based more on the discussion of including all students with disabilities in a general education setting rather than on actual research, which could support these discussions. This is particularly applicable to the research area of inclusion and students with EBD (Harvey, 1996; Lewis et al., 1994; MacMillan et al., 1996). Snell (1991) discussed the notion that full inclusion helps improve attitudes toward students with disabilities, assists in the development of social skills, and helps in the development of friendships among students with and without disabilities. However, Gresham
and MacMillan’s (1997) and Gresham’s (1982) findings sharply contrast Snell’s (1991) research on inclusion. In Gresham’s (1982) study, social interactions among students with disabilities and students without disabilities were more negative than positive. Students with disabilities were often rejected and not accepted by other students, and little evidence indicated that integration promoted favorable modeling effects. Gresham and MacMillan (1997) drew the same conclusions. Hallenbeck and Kauffman (1995) argued that the belief that placing students with disabilities in general education settings facilitates modeling of appropriate behavior is unsupported. Furthermore, placing students with disabilities in a general education setting will not guarantee more favorable attitudes among students without disabilities (Gresham & MacMillan, 1997; Kauffman, 1995).

Inclusion and Physical Education

Prior to the inclusion movement, children with disabilities were educated in separate physical education classes, regular physical education and adapted physical education (APE) classes. Children with disabilities were educated in APE classes because they could not be appropriately educated in physical education classes with the use of supplemental aids, assistance, and services. After the full inclusion movement, the “delivery of physical education services to students with disabilities” would change (Block & Rizzo, 1995, p. 80). That change would consist of moving away from separate physical education classes to including all children with disabilities in regular physical education classes (Block & Rizzo, 1995). An important facet of including children with disabilities in physical education comes from the definition of special education. IDEA 1997 defines special education:

The term special education means specifically designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings, and instruction in physical education. (cited by Block, 1994)

Block (1994) explains that general physical education, regular physical education, special physical education, and education in separate facilities are all a part of the physical education services that are defined in the law. General physical education services provide all children with disabilities with a free and appropriate public education in the LRE. Regular physical education services provide students with or without disabilities with the opportunity to participate in a regular physical education program. The only exception to this regular physical education
program is when a child with a disability is registered in a separate facility full time or if there is a stipulation in the child’s IEP. Special physical education is when the child with a disability has an IEP that specifically requires a special physical education program. In this case, the school system is required to provide such services. Education in separate facilities is when a child with a disability is being educated in a separate facility. Even though the child is being educated in a separate facility, the school system must still insure that the child receives a free appropriate public education and services to meet their IEP goals in physical education. Physical education is an essential part of the educational program for children with and without disabilities. Children with disabilities may require related services (such as physical therapy, occupational, or recreational therapy) to provide extra support to help them benefit from physical education but, at no time can the related services replace physical education.

Physical Education Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Teaching Students with Disabilities

Over the past thirty years, attitudes toward persons with disabilities have been the focus of much research in the field of physical education (Adelson, Carey, & Croke, 1972; Aloia, Knutson, Minner, & Von Seggern, 1980; Ayer, 1970; Duchane & French, 1998; Folsom-Meek, Groteluschen, Nearing, & Krampf, 1999; Folsom-Meek, Nearing, & Krampf, 1995a, 1995b; Hodge, 1998; Hodge & Jansma, 1999, 2000; Kang & Masoodi, 1977; Larsen, 1975; Marston & Leslie, 1983; Minner & Knutson, 1982; Panda & Bartel, 1972; Rapier, Jansma, & Schultz, 1982; Rizzo 1984; Rizzo & Block, 1995; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Rizzo & Kowalski, 1996; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991, 1992; Rizzo & Wright, 1987; Stewart, 1991; Tripp, 1988). Literature in the 1970s suggested that negative attitudes were held by special education teachers, students in education, and rehabilitation counselors toward individuals with disabilities (Ayer, 1970; Kang & Masoodi, 1977; Larsen, 1975; Panda & Bartel, 1972; Rapier et al., 1972). Surveys in the 1980s provided an initial descriptive base of information about the attitudes of physical educators toward teaching individuals with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. Research conducted during the 1980s indicated that attitudes of physical educators toward individuals with disabilities (Jansma & Schultz, 1982; Marston & Leslie, 1983), the individuals’ type of disability (Aloia et al., 1980) and the grade level of pupils taught (Minner & Knutson, 1982; Rizzo 1984) are all factors of unfavorable attitudes. This information from the 1980s was predominantly obtained through the use of one survey instrument called the Physical Educators’ Attitudes Toward Teaching the Handicapped (PEATH) survey (Rizzo, 1984).
The most prominent researcher in the area of physical education teachers’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities is Terry Rizzo. He developed the PEATH survey and has investigated teachers’ and preservice teachers’ attitudes toward teaching the handicapped (Rizzo, 1984). He and his associates have examined attitudes and selected teaching attributes of both in-service and preservice teachers (Rizzo & Block, 1995; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Rizzo & Kowalski, 1996; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991, 1992). The PEATH survey was derived from Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1980) model of the Theory of Reasoned Action. The PEATH survey was developed to “postulate that beliefs underlie attitudes toward teaching handicapped pupils” (Rizzo, 1984, p. 268). The PEATH survey has been revised twice and is now known as the PEATID-III. Revisions to this survey have occurred to reflect changes in the language of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and IDEA (U. S. Department of Education, 1990 and 1997). A summary of the relevant research on in-service and preservice physical education teachers’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities will be discussed next.

**In-service Physical Education Teachers**

The research on in-service physical education teachers’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities has been studied by Duchane & French (1998), Rizzo (1984, 1985), Rizzo & Block (1995), Rizzo & Vispoel (1991), Rizzo & Wright (1987), and Tripp (1988). Rizzo (1984) assessed the attitudes of physical educators toward teaching handicapped pupils in a regular class by using the PEATH survey. He concluded that physical educators held more favorable attitudes toward teaching pupils with learning handicaps than those with physical handicaps. Furthermore, as grade levels advanced, teachers’ attitudes became progressively less favorable toward teaching handicapped pupils.

Rizzo (1985) examined the relationship between attitudes that physical educators have toward teaching handicapped pupils in regular classes and six attributes using the PEATH survey. The six attributes examined were as follows: (a) sex of teachers, (b) highest degree earned, (c) age, (d) coursework in physical education for handicapped pupils, (e) coursework outside of physical education on handicapped pupils, and (f) teaching experience with handicapped pupils. Of the six attributes examined, coursework outside of physical education on handicapped pupils and age were significantly favorable regarding teachers’ attitude. The younger teachers had more favorable attitudes than their older counterparts.
Rizzo and Wright (1987) used the PEATH survey to assess the attitudes of high school physical educators toward teaching students with learning and physical handicaps in regular classes. Attitudes of physical educators toward teaching students with learning handicaps were reported as being more favorable than their attitudes toward teaching students with physical handicaps.

Rizzo and Vispoel (1991) investigated attitudes beyond the ambiguity of the current disability labels of learning and physical handicap. They assessed teacher attitudes toward teaching students with specific handicapping conditions. To do this, they revised the survey to the PEATH-II. The PEATH-II survey included questions about attitudes toward teaching students with specifically labeled disabilities. These disabilities are: educable mentally retarded (EMR), behaviorally disordered (BD), and learning disabled (LD). This version of the survey was used to examine the relationship between selected attributes of physical educators and their attitudes toward teaching students labeled EMR, BD, and LD. They reported three important findings in this study: (a) the quality rather than the amount of teaching experience is more important in fostering favorable attitudes; (b) the more competent the teacher felt, the more favorable attitudes were toward the specific disability; and (c) participating physical educators had more favorable attitudes toward students labeled LD than students labeled EMR and BD.

Due to conflicts in IDEA (U. S. Department of Education, 1997), a third version of the PEATH was created. This version is called the Physical Educators Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities and is known as the PEATID-III (Rizzo, 1993). This version is the most current version of the PEATH. The studies that have utilized this version will be discussed next.

Rizzo and Block (1995) used the PEATID-III survey to assess the relationship between attitudes of physical education teachers held toward students with severe and profound disabilities in a regular classroom and seven selected attributes. They reported less favorable attitudes about teaching students with profound disabilities in a regular classroom. The attributes in this study were as follows: (a) teaching assignment, (b) teaching level, (c) adapted physical education coursework, (d) special education coursework, (e) years of teaching students with disabilities, (f) quality of teaching experience, and (g) perceived competence in teaching students with disabilities. Of these seven attributes, increased coursework in both adapted physical
education and special education and teacher competency were correlated with favorable attitudes toward students with profound disabilities.

Dunchane and French (1998) utilized the PEATID-III survey and a grading practices questionnaire to examine the effect of attitude, gender, and student type (with or without disabilities) on grading practices of secondary physical educators in regular education settings. They reported that grading practices between genders and positive and negative attitudes of teachers had no significant difference. However, there were significant differences between grading criteria for students with disabilities and students without disabilities.

Tripp (1988) conducted a study on attitudes using a different survey called the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) (Yuker, Block, & Campbell, 1960). She examined the comparison of attitudes of regular and adapted physical educators toward disabled individuals. She reported that both groups held unfavorable attitudes toward disabled individuals. She also elaborated that both groups of teachers were more accepting of physical disabilities than with mental disabilities (i.e., amputee, harelip, and epilepsy compared to mentally retardation, cerebral palsy and emotionally disturbed) (Tripp, 1988). The literature pertaining to preservice physical education teachers’ attitudes will be discussed next.

Preservice Physical Education Teachers


Stewart (1991) used the ATDP scale (Yuker, Block & Young, 1966) to determine the effects of specific labels on the attitudes of undergraduate physical education students toward disabled individuals. The labels that were used were non-labeled disabled, mentally disabled, and physically disabled. His findings reported that specific labels and descriptors affected undergraduate physical education students’ attitudes. He suggested that students had less favorable attitudes toward mentally disabled individuals than toward individuals with physically or non-labeled disabled individuals. He mentioned that these results are different from what Rizzo (1984) had reported with students having more positive attitudes toward students labeled and described as physically disabled than students labeled mentally disabled (Stewart, 1991).
Downs and Williams (1994) used the PEATH survey to replicate attitudinal research in European activity settings. They identified several findings from their study. Four of these findings were as follows: (a) individuals who had previous experience with people with disabilities had less favorable attitudes than those without experience; (b) European students held more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with physical disabilities than those with learning disabilities; (c) females held more favorable attitudes toward integration than did the male students; and (d) Belgian students held less favorable attitudes toward integration of people with disabilities than did the English, Danish, and Portuguese students. It is important to mention that one of the reasons why Belgian students held less favorable attitudes may be due to previous experience and perceived competence. Due to the infancy of the cross-cultural examinations of attitudes toward the integration of individuals in European activity settings the results of this investigation are not easily understood.

Rizzo and Vispoel (1992) conducted another study using the PEATH-II. This specific study was done to determine the influence of two physical education courses (Adapted Physical Education and Physical Education for Children) on undergraduate physical educators’ attitudes toward teaching students labeled EMR, BD, and LD. They indicated that attitudes toward teaching students with handicaps improved significantly in the adapted physical education class and not in the physical education for children class.

Rizzo and Kirkendall (1995) assessed the relationship between six attributes and attitudes of future physical educators toward teaching students labeled EMR, LD, and BD. The six attributes consisted of (a) gender, (b) age, (c) year in school, (d) experience with students with disabilities, (e) perceived competence in teaching students with disabilities, and (f) academic preparation regarding individuals with disabilities. Of these six attributes, perceived competence in teaching students with disabilities and academic preparation were reported as factors that may lead to more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities, especially EMR and LD. Also reported was that age and year in school were more favorable attitudes toward students with BD. Preservice teachers approaching graduation held more positive attitudes toward teaching students with BD.

Folsom-Meek et al. (1995a) compared physical education teaching majors’ attitudes toward teaching students classified as behaviorally disordered (BD), mildly mentally retarded (MiMR), and learning disabled (LD). The PEATID-III was modified for this study to the
PEATID-III Preservice Version [PS] (Rizzo, 1993). This study found that preservice physical education teachers held favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities, in descending order, were: LD, MiMR, and BD (Folsom-Meek et al., 1995a).

Folsom-Meek et al. (1995b) conducted another study using the PEATID-III [PS] (Rizzo, 1993) survey to determine relationships between preservice physical education teachers attributes and attitudes toward students with disabilities such as LD, MiMR, and BD. The eight attributes included: (a) age, (b) number of adapted physical education courses, (c) year in school, (d) hands-on experience, (e) perceived competence, (f) hands-on experience course requirement, (g) overall educational preparation, and (h) certification level. Of the eight attributes, these researchers reported that preservice physical education teachers who rated high on their overall educational preparation, perceived themselves as competent, and had a hands-on experience course requirement had favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities (Folsom-Meek et al., 1995b).

Rizzo and Kowalski (1996) used the regular version of the PEATID-III to examine the relationship among six selected attributes (gender, level of program (graduate/undergraduate), major, number of infusion-based courses, number of adapted physical education courses, and perceived competence) of physical education students and their attitudes toward teaching/working with individuals with disabilities. Among the six attributes, it was reported that students who perceived competence in teaching/working with individuals with disabilities had more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities.

Hodge (1998) utilized the PEATID-III survey to examine the attitudes of prospective physical education teachers toward teaching students with disabilities. He surveyed students before and after registering in introductory adapted physical education courses, with and without practicum experiences. He investigated whether on-campus, off campus, or no practicum experience impacted attitudes and examined prospective physical education teachers’ attitudes as a part of their gender, course work preparation, and past experience teaching students with disabilities. Findings include (a) individuals who had enrolled in an introductory adapted physical education course held more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities; (b) gender and previous experience teaching students with disabilities impacted attitudes of prospective physical educators. Hodge (1998) also found that prospective female physical education teachers who had experience working with students with disabilities held
more favorable attitudes than males with or without experience. Also, prospective female
physical education teachers who had experience working with students with disabilities held
more favorable attitudes than females without experience teaching students with disabilities.
These findings support previous research regarding prospective physical education teachers’
previous experience teaching students with disabilities.

Hodge and Jansma (1999) examined attitude change of physical education majors in
relation to the amount of contact time in an introductory adapted physical education (APE)
course and the type of practicum location, which is on or off campus. They utilized the PEATID-
III survey and a practicum information questionnaire (PIQ) for this investigation. The PEATID-
III survey was given to physical education majors during week 1, 10 and 15 of their introductory
APE course. The PIQ questionnaire was given to the APE instructors to complete. As a result of
the PEATID-III survey and PIQ questionnaire, the researchers reported that on and off campus
practicums provided positive attitude changes between week 1 and 10 and weeks 1 and 15. The
on-campus practicum experience however, improved attitude changes more than the off campus
practicum experience.

Folsom-Meek et al. (1999) examined the effects of (a) academic major, (b) gender, and
(c) hands-on experience on attitudes of preservice personnel toward teaching students with
disabilities using the PEATID-III [PS]. The preservice personnel consisted of physical education
majors, special education majors, elementary education majors, therapeutic recreation majors,
and pre-occupational and pre-physical therapy majors. They reported three findings from this
study: (a) students in majors apart from physical education had more favorable attitudes toward
students with disabilities; (b) female preservice personnel had more favorable attitudes than male
personnel; (c) preservice personnel who had hands on experience had more favorable attitudes
than those with no experience. This supports the findings reported by Hodge (1998).

Hodge and Jansma (2000) utilized the PEATID-III survey to examine the attitudes of
physical education majors toward teaching students with disabilities. The following variables
were examined: (a) gender, (b) ethnic status, (c) previous experience teaching individuals with
disabling conditions, (d) course work preparation, (e) academic major, and (f) perceived comfort
level in teaching by student disability type (i.e., sensory and physical disabilities). They reported
three significant findings. The first finding was female physical education majors’ with
experience held more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities than their
male peers (with or without experience) and their non-experienced female peers. The second finding stated that females’ perceived comfort level was significantly higher than the males toward teaching students with physical disabilities. The third finding explained that individuals who had taken courses that prepared them to teach students with disabilities held more favorable attitudes toward perceived comfort levels toward students with sensory and physical disabilities.

Based on the literature that has been reviewed, preservice and in-service physical education teachers’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities has been explored extensively with a focus on several different types of disabilities and studies do not directly address students with EBD.

The Concept of Attitudes

Until the 1960s, social scientists viewed “attitudes as behavioral dispositions” and presumed that attitudes could help explain human actions (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 13). The study of attitudes has been “characterized by an embarrassing degree of ambiguity and confusion” (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975, p. 1). In the process of defining attitude, many researchers have used several different definitions to describe the term. Louis Thurston (1928) defined attitude as “a man’s inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats, and convictions about any specific topic” (p. 531). He later revised his original definition of attitude to “the affect for or against a psychological object” (Thurston, 1931, p. 261). Azjen and Fishbein (1980) point out that Thurston expressed that “although a person’s attitude toward an object should be related to the pattern of his behavior with respect to the object, there is no necessary relationship between attitude and any given behavior” (p. 15). A few years later, Gordon W. Allport (1935) developed his own definition of attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related” (p. 810).

Fishbein (1967) explains that individuals should not only be interested in the relationship between attitude and behavior but they should investigate the relationships between four things: “(a) attitudes, (b) beliefs, (c) behavioral intentions, and (d) behavior” (p. 479). Fishbein (1967) expresses that

Beliefs (cognitions) and behavioral intentions (conations) can best be viewed as determinants or consequents of attitude; rather than being viewed as parts of attitude,
these variables should be viewed as independent phenomena that are related to, and serve as indicants of, an individual’s attitude (p. 491).

He also states that “behavior toward a given object is a function of many variables, of which attitude toward the object is only one” (Fishbein, 1967, p. 491).

Bem (1970) discussed the link between beliefs and attitudes as “their foundations in four human activities: thinking, feeling, behaving, and interacting with others” (p. 2). He continued to say “many beliefs are the product of direct experience” which trigger varying attitudes of likes and dislikes (Bem, 1970, p.5). He also explains that “evaluative beliefs (cognitive component) about an object may partially determine, but are not synonymous with, attitudes toward an object” (Bem, 1970, p. 15). He continues to describe how it is possible to like something that we evaluate negatively and dislike something that we evaluate positively. He explains, that in society an individual’s view or attitudes can cause behavior (Bem, 1970). He also states that behavior causes attitudes and that Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance deals directly with “the consistencies and inconsistencies between an individual’s behavior and his beliefs or attitudes” (Bem, 1970, p. 54).

The theory of cognitive dissonance assumes that if a person is persuaded to “engage in behavior that is inconsistent with his beliefs or attitudes, he will experience the discomfort of ‘cognitive dissonance,’ which will motivate him to seek a resolution of that inconsistency” (Bem, 1970, p. 55). In other words, if a person convinces himself that he believes in what he has done then he truly holds the beliefs or attitudes suggested by his behavior. Bem (1970) continues to explain that the “inconsistency or dissonance between a person’s beliefs or attitudes and his/her behavior will motivate belief or attitude change toward cognitive consistency” (p. 55). He proceeds to say, “behavior and the conditions under which it occurs are one of the major foundations of an individual’s beliefs and attitudes” (Bem, 1970, p. 66).

Triandis (1971) defines attitude and the relationship among attitude and behavior as: An idea charged with emotion, which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations. It has cognitive, affective, and behavioral components and several kinds of functions: it helps people to adjust, to defend their egos, to express their values, and to understand the world around them. The experiences of people determine their attitudes. As attitudes develop, cognitions become more differentiated, integrated, and organized, and affect and behavioral intentions become associated with these conditions.
Attitude is not a necessary or sufficient cause of behavior, but it is a contributing cause. Behavior often changes attitudes, as people develop attitudes that justify their previous behavior. Behavior is the result not only of attitudes but also of norms, habits, and expectations about reinforcement. (p. 25)

Triandis (1971) stated that “when all four factors are consistent, there is consistency between attitudes and behavior; when the four factors are inconsistent, there is much less consistency” (p. 16). He further explained that “norms of social behavior depend on messages received from others” and “habits get established through learning processes” (Triandis, 1971, p. 22). He also explained that the way a person feels about the “attitude object” would determine how he would react to the object (Triandis, 1971, p.22). He states that “attitudes alone do not predict behavior; attitudes together with norms and habits do” (Triandis, 1971, p. 16).

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) developed the theory of reasoned action, which emphasizes the link between two belief systems, intentions, and actual behaviors. The term reasoned action indicates that behaviors originate in people’s beliefs systems. Therefore, people can be taught to reason about the right way to act. The two belief systems are personal beliefs and normative beliefs. These are examined in relation to a desired behavior. A person’s intentions are affected by personal beliefs (attitude toward behavior) and subjective norms (perceived beliefs of peers). An example of a personal belief might be a student asking, “Do I think throwing the ball is good or bad?” An example of a subjective norm might be a student asking, “Do my friends think throwing the ball is good?” It is possible to predict or explain a person’s intention or behavior on three things. The three things are (a) a person’s attitude toward behavior, (b) his subjective norm, and (c) his relative weights.

However, in order to get a “complete understanding of intentions it is necessary to explain why people hold certain attitudes and subjective norms” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 7). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) explain that “attitudes are a function of beliefs” and “the beliefs that underlie a person’s attitude toward the behavior” is called behavioral beliefs (p. 7). They continue to explain that behavioral beliefs contain positive outcomes that “will hold a favorable attitude toward performing the behavior” and “negative outcomes will hold an unfavorable attitude” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 7). On the other hand, subjective norms are “also a function of beliefs, but beliefs of a different kind” such as “the person’s beliefs that specific
individuals or groups think he should or should not perform the behavior” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 7).

They further explain that “beliefs underlying a person’s subjective norm” is called normative belief (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 7). Normative beliefs pertain to perceptions about what significant others think you should do and your motivation to comply with their beliefs. For example, if people who you are motivated to comply with think you should perform the behavior, you will perceive social pressure to perform the behavior. The opposite is true as well, if people who you are motivated to comply with think you should not perform the behavior, you will perceive social pressure to avoid the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The theory of reasoned action states that action is determined by a person’s intention that is influenced by attitudes and normative beliefs. Attitudes are influenced by personal beliefs and values, and normative beliefs are influenced by the beliefs of significant others and the motivation to comply with the beliefs of others. So the interaction of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions are what guide behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Similar to the theory of reasoned action, Biddle and Chatzisarantis (1999) express that in predicting behavior, attitudes are only a part of a more complex decision-making process where other factors can also be of influence. Values, beliefs, perceptions of control, and intentions moderate attitude-behavior relationships. Specifically, attitudes cannot determine behavior unless they lead to the development of intentions. (p. 9)

Even though there is a relationship among beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, it is possible that an individual will behave differently than expected.

Separate but equal school facilities ceased to exist when the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that separate education could not be considered equal education. Although the law did not specifically include students with disabilities, it paved the way for laws including all students in regular education settings regardless of disability. These laws, however, have led to debate and criticism across the education spectrum. At the center of the debate rests the concept of inclusion. Although the purpose of Public Law 94-142 mandates a Least Restrictive Environment, inclusion more often than not serves as the primary catalyst in determining a child’s placement.

While PL 94-142 and inclusion affected all children with disabilities, research on students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders and teacher perception toward these students is
limited. Various quantitative studies exist investigating attitudes physical education teachers have toward students with disabilities. The majority of the attitudinal studies focus on the theory of reasoned actions, which emphasizes a link between individuals’ beliefs, intentions, and actual behaviors. Unlike the quantitative studies, few qualitative studies have been performed focusing on the inclusion of students with EBD and their teachers’ perceptions toward teaching them. This study focuses the inclusion of students with EBD in a general education setting and the perceptions of preservice physical education teachers have toward them before, during, and after their student teaching experience.
CHAPTER 3
Methodology

Qualitative research focuses on “process, meaning, and understanding” (Merriam, 1998, p. 8). The investigative focus of this study was to gain an understanding of preservice physical education teachers and their interactions with students with EBD as well as their thoughts, feelings, and concerns regarding these students. A qualitative design best fits the purpose and exploratory nature of this study. A quantitative survey (Rizzo, 1993) has already been done on the “attitudes” of preservice physical education teachers. This survey, however, does not elicit participants’ elaborations or explain their responses. The study herein was designed to explore the thoughts, feelings, and concerns preservice physical education teachers have about teaching students with EBD in a general education setting beyond that of a written survey.

Qualitative research does not begin with hypotheses but rather research questions to guide the study which will eventually end in hypotheses and begin the process of theory building.

Research questions are similar to hypotheses in quantitative research; hypotheses are much more precise and indicate the nature of measurement and analysis involved . . . [research] questions reflect the researcher’s thinking on the most significant factors of the study. They guide the inquiry, and they determine how data are to be collected.
(Merriam, 1998, p. 60)

To remind the reader, the research questions that guided this study were as follows: (a) What thoughts, feelings, and concerns do preservice physical education teachers have regarding teaching students with emotional/behavioral disorders in a general education setting and how do their thoughts, feelings, and concerns change over time? (b) How do preservice physical education teachers interact with students with emotional/behavioral disorders in the classroom/gymnasium and how do their experiences change over time?

Going beyond the written survey, in-depth interviews and longitudinal observations were the primary data collecting tools used for this qualitative study. An investigation into what student teachers think and feel about teaching students with EBD in the physical education setting was conducted through in-depth interviews. Throughout the in-depth interviews, the
concerns student teachers expressed regarding students with EBD in the physical education setting before, during, and after their student teaching experience were explored. What change in these teachers’ perceptions occurred as a result of exploring the concerns of these beginning teachers over time? Along with utilizing the interviews, observations helped document how preservice physical education teachers interacted with students with EBD in the classroom. As this study sought to examine student teachers’ interactions with students with EBD, observations were made over time in the health and physical education setting as well. Further details of these data collecting techniques are explained later in this chapter.

Participants and Setting

The participants in this study were four preservice physical education teachers from a local university who were getting ready to begin their student teaching experience: Michelle, Joe, Andrew, and Lisa (all pseudonyms). The participants were selected by purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). By employing purposeful sampling, I was considered an “insider” because of my familiarity with the school systems in which the preservice physical education teachers were placed during their student teaching experience. In addition to purposeful sampling, this was a convenience sample too, due to specific limitations of research costs, travel expenses, and time constraints regarding travel to the location of the schools where the student teachers were undergoing their experience.

Because the focus of the study was on preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions toward teaching students with EBD in a general education setting, a typical sample was most appropriate for this study. A “typical sample” would be “the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 1998, p. 62). Preservice physical education teachers getting ready to undergo their student teaching experience at the land grant university where the study was conducted were considered “typical” as their experiences are not out of the ordinary. The preservice physical education teachers did not have to possess extra-ordinary behaviors or beliefs to participate in this study.

The participants came from one physical education program in the local area. They did not have to be unique from one another in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and religious background. In selecting the participants, there was no control over the selection of cooperating
teachers and school systems. The cooperating teachers were selected for the preservice teachers through their university and student teaching coordinators from local school systems.

Access to the participants was gained by contacting the student teaching coordinator of one local university around the first of May, to ask if he would be willing to locate preservice physical education teachers who were student teaching in the Fall 2001 semester. Seidman (1998) suggests that the researcher not rely on other people to make contact with the participants because “building the interviewing relationship begins the moment the potential participant hears of the study” (p. 39). Therefore, permission to speak to the participants on the phone and in person was sought in order to explain the study in more detail and answer any questions the participants had. Unable to speak to all the potential participants, I arranged with the student teaching coordinator to briefly speak to them during their first student teaching seminar meeting. This initial contact with the participants allowed me to start building the groundwork for the interviewing relationship (Seidman, 1998). I explained my study to six potential participants whom which all agreed to be in my study. However, to give more depth than breadth to the study, I chose to focus on only four: two males and two females. In addition to discussing my study, I explained to them that I would have a dual role in their student teaching experience. My first role would be their university supervisor, where I would be observing them six times throughout the semester. My second role would be an “observer as participant” where I would be interviewing and observing them during their student teaching experience.

Rationale

Selecting my participants was difficult. All the student teachers agreed to be a part of the study so it made it difficult to select four out of the six. The four participants were selected based on their geographical placements. After informing the six potential participants of the selected four, a meeting was held to discuss the consent form. After this meeting with the four participants, the first interview was arranged. Before any interviews were conducted, one participant dropped out of the study because he had too many time constraints and thought it would be difficult to be a part of the study. An alternate participant was selected to insure the study had four participants.

Participant Consent

Each participant read and signed the consent form before any interviews were conducted (See Appendix A). Each was also given a copy of the consent form. The consent form explained
the following items: the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the individuals who would have access to the transcripts, tape-recordings, field notes, personal journals, confidentiality, and anonymity. The participants were also aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants so that the data collected would “not embarrass or in other ways harm them” (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998, p. 44). Once the participants gave consent, data for this study were collected through interviews, observations, and personal journals.

Data Collection

Interviews

Because this study focused on preservice physical education teachers’ experiences and feelings toward teaching students with EBD in a general education setting, the best way to collect that information was by conducting in-depth interviews and asking the preservice physical education teachers to express their thoughts and feelings. It is essential to understand that “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 1998, p. 72). When I conducted in-depth interviews, I was interested “in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 1998, p. 3).

Interviews were semi-structured in nature. Semi-structured interviews offered a “middle ground” of questions between structured and unstructured ones. In a semi-structured interview, the questions are “more flexibly worded” or include “a mix of more and less structured questions” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). This format allowed me to guide the interview by “a list of questions or issues to be explored” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). This type of interview format also gave me the opportunity to react and “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview” of the participants, and “to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for more flexibility in the inquiry process. The goal was to allow participants to explore their thoughts and feelings and not be bound to answer closed questions. I wanted to be able to ask questions that lead to new issues on the topic that added a richer collection of information during the interviewing process. Because this study explored preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions over time, interviews were conducted with the participants four times during their student teaching experience. The first interview was conducted during the first week they started their student teaching experience. The
second interview was conducted at the end of their secondary placement. The third interview was conducted during the first week of their elementary placement. The fourth interview was conducted on the last two days of their student teaching experience.

Each interview lasted approximately sixty minutes depending on the participant. Each interview was conducted at the time and location that was most convenient for the participant. Interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed to assist in the analysis. In addition to the formal interviews, numerous informal interviews were also conducted after observing the participants.

**Observations**

In addition to interviewing, observations of the participants were made in their student teaching setting. Observations allowed me to observe “in the natural field setting” and “a first hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 1998, p. 94). Furthermore, observations “[provided] some knowledge of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews” (Merriam, 1998, p. 96). It is important to note that student teachers are used to being observed which made it easier for me to be present during this experience.

During the observation process with each student teacher, the behavior of the students with EBD and how the class and the student teacher respond to that behavior was examined. Observations occurred from August to December in both the secondary and elementary settings. Field notes were taken during each observation.

Written field notes are composed of “descriptive data” of what I observed and my “comments on the data or on the project itself” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 137). Written field notes described the interactions between the students with EBD and the student teacher. My personal thoughts and feelings of what I observed were also added. “An important component of field notes is observer comments” because the comments go beyond what occurred in the observation and I was engaged in the beginning process of data analysis (Merriam, 1998, p. 106).

**Personal Journals**

In addition to interviewing and observing, the participants were asked to keep a personal journal. Each participant was given a spiral notebook to use and keep for his/her journal. Unlike an interview or observation, the process of journal writing does not alter the study by my
presence. By using a personal journal, I wanted “to learn more about the situation, person, or event being investigated” (Merriam, 1998, p. 116). By maintaining a personal journal, the student teachers recorded their thoughts and feelings about their student teaching experience as well as their interactions with students with EBD. The importance of the personal journal was that it was a “reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 116).

Journals often create a safe context where the participants provided additional information that was not recorded in an interview or observation. By keeping a record of their student teaching experience, they encountered several different situations, thoughts, feelings, and concerns that I was unable to include in an interview, or observe. It allowed them to write and reflect on what they have experienced without the presence of a tape recorder or an interviewer (Merriam, 1998).

The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. In this study, I was engaged with the participants in “face to face” interactions, unlike the use of surveys where the participants have little or no contact with the researchers (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 26). My role in this study was “observer as participant.” The observer as participant role means to observe first and participate second. This allowed me to observe and participate with the individuals or group that I was observing. This also allowed me to gain access to a variety of people and information. By being an observer as participant, it allowed me to “establish an insider’s identity without participating” the entire time (Merriam, 1998, p. 101). During this study, I looked at the behavior of the students and how the class and student teacher responded to that behavior.

In addition to my role as an observer as participant, I was also a supervisor at the university. In this situation, I informed the participants when I was coming out to observe them for the study. The participants selected the classes in which I observed them in the university supervisor role. I realized that the issue of power could come into play because the participants might have continued to view me as their university supervisor, rather than a researcher. In mentioning the power issue, it is important to note that it could be a possible limitation to this study. However, I soon discovered that my dual roles allowed for the building of trusting relationships between the participants and myself. This dual role allowed for better insights on
them personally as well as myself, therefore serving as a positive and beneficial contribution to the environment of the study.

**Ethical Guidelines**

In this study, I adhered to four ethical guidelines mentioned by Bogdan and Biklen (1998). First, the identities of the participants were protected verbally and in writing. Second, each participant was informed of the research study as well as obtain written consent to participate in the study. Third, the participants were given the opportunity to have the tape cassettes from the interviews after the study was complete. And finally, the findings from the data were triangulated and member-checked.

**Data Analysis**

**Organizing and Coding**

Since qualitative research generates a large mass of data, the material needed to be continually organized. I followed Merriam’s (1998) suggestions for organizing and managing data (p. 164). The first step was to code the data in a way that was easy for me to access any information that was needed later on (Merriam, 1998). The next step was to create folders that contained basic information on each participant. Each folder was labeled with their pseudonym, the schools where they were student teaching, and dates of each interview. Each folder also contained a copy of the transcriptions, field notes, and personal journal entries.

From each of the participant’s folders, I created a folder with another copy of the transcriptions, field notes, and personal journal entries to use for coding purposes. On every piece of data collected, I coded the data by the participant’s pseudonym, the date, if was the secondary or elementary placement, and the order of the interview. This coding process was essential for maintaining order during the data analysis stages.

**The Constant Comparative Method**

The process of analyzing data was an ongoing process (Merriam, 1998). Because this was a qualitative study, the proper way to analyze data was to do it “simultaneously with the data collection” (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). Not knowing what would be uncovered, I understood that the final product would be shaped by the data that were collected and analyzed (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, after each interview I transcribed and analyzed the data to prepare for the following interview. After reading through the transcripts, important topics were recognized that needed to
be addressed in the next interview. Furthermore, this provided an opportunity to add or drop certain questions that were not helpful for the study.

While observing the participants, I started the process of analyzing the data during the observation stage by jotting down personal notes in the margins of the field notes. After observing, informal interviews were necessary to gain a better understanding of what was observed from the participant’s point of view. This was not always possible due to the participant’s teaching schedules. As for the personal journals, they were collected at the end of the secondary placement and at the end of the study and analyzed. I wanted the participants to be comfortable writing in their journals without any interruptions during each placement. Common themes or topics were recognized after the first interview, the first observation and the first personal journal that was collected. According to Merriam (1998), this is known as category construction.

Reading through the first set of interviews, I wrote down “notes, comments, observations, and queries” that stood out or struck me as “interesting, potentially relevant, or important” to this study (Merriam, 1998, p. 181). During this task, I read over the notes and started categorizing them. At this point, a list of categories were created from each interview. When reading through the first set of observations and personal journals, the same steps were followed as during the analysis of the first set of interviews. The list of categories that generated from the first set of interviews were compared with the list of groups from each individual interview. According to Merriam (1998), this is known as the “constant comparative” method of data analysis, a technique originally described by Glaser and Straus (1967).

The constant comparative method is when a researcher “begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set” (Merriam, 1998, p. 159). These comparisons guide the data into possible categories that are constantly “compared to each other and to other instances” (Merriam, 1998, p. 159). During this process, the researcher compares each piece of data that is produced from the participants’ transcribed interviews, written field notes from observations, and their personal journals and create a new list of groups which will turn into themes or topics where the following items will be sorted (Merriam, 1998).
Validity and Reliability

The terms validity and reliability have been common terms within the quantitative paradigm. However,

Many writers on the topic argue that qualitative research, which is based on different assumptions about reality and a different worldview, should consider validity and reliability from a perspective congruent with the philosophical assumptions underlying the paradigm. This may even result in naming the concepts themselves differently (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). (Merriam, 1998, p. 200)

Therefore, the terms “trustworthiness” and “credibility” were exchanged for validity and reliability to better fit with the qualitative study described herein. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the use of five strategies suggested by Merriam (1998) were applied to ensure internal validity. These included triangulation, member-checks, long term observations at the research site, peer examination, and researcher’s bias. Triangulation resulted from the use of multiple data collection methods including interviews, observations, personal journals, and analysis. Member-checks occurred between the participants and myself to make sure the data and interpretations were accurate. This occurred throughout the study. Repeated observations throughout the preservice physical education teachers’ student teaching experience were conducted. Peer examination among colleagues and myself allowed discussion on the findings as they appeared, while explicit statements regarding the researcher’s bias clarified any assumptions about the study.

External validity produces results that may be generalized by the reader or user according to Merriam (1998). Readers generalize when aspects of the findings apply to their own needs or situations. To enhance the external validity, this study used “rich, thick description” so that transferability was possible by the reader. Merriam (1998) explains that providing the readers with a rich thick description will allow them “to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (p. 211).

Researcher Bias

This study revolved around preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions toward teaching students with EBD in a general education setting. I was interested in the thoughts, feelings, and concerns that preservice physical education teachers have before, during, and after their student teaching experience. By investigating the thoughts, feelings, and concerns of
preservice physical education teachers, it was important to include the researcher’s teaching experiences and personal beliefs in this groundwork because those factors affect the researcher’s perspective. In qualitative research, the researcher is “the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). By filtering the data through the researcher’s eyes and ears, “interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews” (Merriam, 1998, p. 203). In order to represent the participants' experience, it was necessary to elaborate on the researcher’s teaching experiences and personal beliefs.

Five years of teaching physical education to diverse learners has led me to believe that students learn by “a process whereby new meanings are created by the learner within the context of her or his current knowledge” (Poplin, 1988, p. 404). Students learn through direct experiences that give them the opportunity to question previously held thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. By providing students with the opportunity to reflect on their perceptions, students gain insight into their personal and professional philosophies and feelings about teaching students with EBD. Even though they may retain negative perceptions toward teaching students with EBD, it is likely that students will benefit from reflecting about their perceptions and their approach to teaching.

Prior to the student teaching experience, students hold well-developed thoughts, feelings, and concerns about teaching students with EBD based on their previous experiences. These experiences include non-constructive dialogue with peers, negative attitudes communicated through classes or the lack of exposure to the issues of teaching students with EBD. Throughout their student teaching experience, they continuously create and recreate new thoughts, feelings, and concerns about teaching students with EBD (Poplin, 1988). By studying these creations, I hoped to understand how preservice physical education teachers “make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). It was essential to explore the perceptions preservice physical education teachers have developed as a result of their real life experiences because it adds to the research that has already been completed in this area.

Most of the research in this area has been conducted through the use of surveys and researchers are now encouraging “the use of qualitative research designs” to enrich attitudinal research (Hodge & Jansma, 1999, p. 60). I believe that the exploration of the thoughts, feelings, and concerns of preservice physical education teachers provided a rich understanding of their perceptions and experiences as they teach students with EBD. Creswell (1994) explains that the
researcher could “understand a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (pp. 1-2). The experiences that the preservice physical education teachers reflect on will paint a realistic picture of their individual viewpoints. Subsequently, I communicated these reflections and reported them in this study.

My personal experience was the catalyst for this study. During my undergraduate studies, only one course that focused on students with special needs was required. This was an adapted physical education course. After completing this course, the mention of special needs children seemed to fade from focus. During my student teaching experience, I did not have a student with special needs, which many would find inconceivable. However, since the push for inclusion, students with special needs are being placed in general education classes with teachers that are not prepared to teach them.

Inclusion has nudged its way into the school systems and related arts and physical education classes have become the so-called dumping ground where all students are included. Despite this trend toward inclusion, the number of courses that focus on special needs children in teacher preparation programs has not increased. However, preservice teachers are being faced with teaching students with EBD without additional training, which illuminates the motivation behind my interest. Although preservice teachers are required to take one course that focuses on special needs children, it does not prepare them to face the challenges of working with students with EBD. Throughout five years of teaching physical education, I observed several student teachers develop negative attitudes while they struggled to teach students with EBD. From these experiences, I have become interested in the preservice teacher’s thoughts, feelings, and concerns when teaching students with EBD before, during, and after their student teaching experience.
CHAPTER 4

Student Teachers and Their Preservice Settings

This study took place at a large southeastern United States land-grant university, which I will refer to as Gamay University. The university offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degree programs. The bachelor degree programs are composed of seven undergraduate academic colleges housed within one of the seven academic colleges, the Department of Teaching and Learning offers programs emphasizing the improvement of instruction in all educational settings.

There are several programs within the Department of Teaching and Learning. Health and Physical Education (HPE) is one such program. Designed to prepare teachers in health and physical education, the program provides experiences for students in the hopes they will become effective and dedicated health and physical education teachers. The ultimate goal of the HPE program is to produce teachers who are able to meet the needs of all students by creating, delivering, and assessing comprehensive health and physical education programs.

Within the Health and Physical Education program, students have two experiences in a public school setting. Students are first involved in with practicum teaching. This experience enables the university instructor to take students into the local elementary, middle, and high schools to observe and teach small groups of students a skill or activity. The student teaching experience follows each student’s practicum teaching experience. This experience is a requirement, which all students must complete before achieving a license in the state. During the student teaching experience, students are assigned to specific schools where they will teach children in grades K-12 health and physical education. Each student teacher spends approximately eight weeks at an elementary school and another eight weeks at either a middle or high school. While student teaching, each student is also required to coach at least eight weeks at the middle or high school. In addition to developing lesson plans, teaching, and coaching, students are required to develop a paper-based portfolio, an electronic portfolio, complete phone call and internet assignments, design bulletin boards, and create a showcase video of their teaching.

Setting the scene is an important component in qualitative research. “This is done through writing a vividly descriptive narrative of the setting and the situation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 238). A rich description of the participants and their settings will be discussed next.
Participants and Their Settings

Michelle

Twenty-one year old Michelle grew up in a small rural town where children were raised to respect their elders. She decided to go away to college to pursue her interest in becoming a veterinarian. After her first year, she decided that her original plan of studying veterinary medicine was not what she wanted to do. According to Michelle, she “loved sports and working with kids” so she decided that she wanted to become a physical education teacher. Before Michelle started her student teaching experience, she was unsure whether or not she wanted to teach at an elementary or high school. In our first interview, she expressed that “being a high school teacher . . . would give [her] the opportunity to help students their last time.” Michelle thought she would be a more effective high school teacher because she was “closer in age” and could thus relate better to the students.

I met Michelle while I was teaching my first Adapted Physical Education (APE) and Gymnastics classes at the university. My first impression of Michelle stemmed not from what she said but rather from her quiet and reserved manner. She rarely showed any emotions until provoked by others. However, the person provoking her emotions would seldom hear her feelings. Instead, she would explode with a variety of uncontrollable emotions only to people she felt comfortable with sharing her true feelings.

I was struck by Michelle’s sense of secrecy when it came to her emotions. In fact, she expressed my observation by declaring “I don’t like talking about those types of emotions.” During each of the four formal interviews, she often struggled to make eye contact with me but would hold eye contact if she was expressing something that made her happy or angry. When she would discuss something that made her happy or laugh, such as seeing a student smile during an activity, she would smile and laugh without a care in the world. If the conversation changed to an upsetting topic, such as talking about her cooperating teacher, her face would turn red; her legs would start to shake and her voice would rise as if she had just seen a horrific sight. Within seconds, she would calm herself down and go back to her soft-spoken country accent slightly shifting continuously throughout our conversations.

From the first formal interview to the last, it was a challenge to get Michelle to open up completely. At times, she would be short and not forthcoming with information. I sometimes felt as though I was talking to a child who was trying to mask “the truth.” However, by the end of
each interview, she was more relaxed and no longer struggled to contain her thoughts. Contrarily, she shared them openly. In the beginning of each interview, she would not face me and constantly pulled her hat down over her eyes. However, as we spent more time together she would face me, make hand gestures, and express what she was thinking more freely. During the times I observed her in the classroom or the gymnasium or conducted informal interviews, she seemed the most at ease with sharing her thoughts and feelings. When I visited her at each school placement, she always greeted me with a big smile and occasionally an informal, “What’s up?” It was amazing and rewarding to see how comfortable she was when I came out to observe her compared to how rigid she had been in the beginning of each interview. I recall asking her about this and she replied, “I don’t know, maybe it’s the tape recorder, I don’t know,” and she laughed with a smile.

Joe

Like Michelle, Joe also grew up in a small rural town where he learned that in order to receive respect one must give it first. Joe’s morals and beliefs stem from the way he was raised by his mother and stepfather. As I became more acquainted with him, I found that his morals and beliefs run deep into his soul. He explained that his family was not wealthy but they loved each other deeply and respected each other with every ounce of integrity that any individual could possess. In discussing his family, Joe recalled a time when he was riding in a car with his brother and his brother waved at somebody standing on the side of the road. Joe said, “Who was [that person]? And [his brother] said, ‘I don’t know.’ He’s just waving to be nice and that’s just the way I come from, that’s my family.”

Joe came to college on an athletic scholarship over ten years ago. He left during his junior year to pursue his dream to be a professional athlete. After ten years of being a professional athlete, Joe decided to return to college and finish his degree. In trying to figure out the best way to obtain his degree, Thirty-three year old Joe investigated several different physical education programs around his hometown and found out that it would take him more than two and a half years to complete his degree. However, if he picked up at the university he left, it would only take him a year and a half to finish. After numerous discussions with his wife and family, he decided to return to the college he left earlier. Leaving his wife and two-year-old son in a different state, he traveled back to college to become a teacher. With nightly calls home.
to his wife and son, he was determined to complete his degree as quickly as possible so he could return home to his family.

The intrinsic motivation that Joe holds deep within himself pushes him to be the best possible teacher he can be. Even though Joe’s passion of being a professional athlete is a large part of his character, his desire to teach physical education to children runs further and deeper than one could imagine. Besides his strong desire to teach, Joe also has experience working with children in many one-on-one situations, teaching them the basic skills needed to succeed in individual sports. He expressed, “I work a lot with young kids 12 and under, but I’ve never had the chance to work with a lot of high school kids . . . so I had mixed emotions going into it.”

I met Joe while I was teaching my second APE class at the university. I recall seeing him on the first day of class in the front row seat with his book and notebook, ready to work. He was quiet and I felt as if he never took his eyes off of me for a second the entire time I spoke to the class. He approached me after class and explained his situation about returning back to school after a long leave of absence. I immediately gained respect for him due to his decision to put his life on hold to finish what he started. Throughout the entire semester, Joe worked extremely hard to succeed in class by studying, demonstrating, evaluating, and asking as many questions as possible. His work ethic amazed me as he studied countless hours in order to understand the material he read and learned in class. Joe explained to me, “It takes me longer to understand things so I have to read them over and over again until I get it.”

His dedication spread into his personal life as well. Instead of spending time solely with his wife and son during weekend visits, he often spent time reviewing material and studying for tests and quizzes. Joe said, “I actually had my wife quiz me on the information in the chapter.” Joe took his schoolwork very seriously and explained that he was in school “to gain as much knowledge as possible” to help him in his long awaited career of teaching. We had several discussions throughout the semester and even though the class had ended, Joe still kept in contact with me. My door was always open if he had questions or merely wanted to keep me posted on his status. Joe’s personality represents an individual who goes after what he wants in life. He strives to make a difference in everyone’s life around him. He has strong beliefs that steer his desires in becoming a caring, helpful, and emotional teacher.

During each interview, Joe would begin with his legs crossed and talk to the recorder. After the first minute, his eyes would change focus from the recorder to me. Throughout several
interviews, Joe would battle with a slew of emotions that he was recalling from his experiences. When he would speak deeply about something, he would grab his chest as if the information that he was sharing was eating away at him until he relinquished it from his heart. His hands would have their own conversation going on at times, as he would move them around quickly if he was getting excited or slowly as he was explaining something in detail. Joe would talk for hours if I would let him. From our first conversation, he expressed the following: “I knew I would learn a lot about the kids but I’m finding I’m learning a lot about myself as a teacher.”

Andrew

Andrew is married and lives in a county about 30 miles from the university. He already held a degree in business and expressed that he was initially anxious about his business career because he wanted to “make some money, make a name” for himself. Employed at a job he was not happy with, he said, “I’m tired of this, something has to give, I feel like I’m dying each day at work.” Feeling unhappy and unsatisfied, he talked things over with his wife and said, “You know what, I’m going back to school.” The next day, he walked into his job and quit. He continued to say that the “weight of the world fell off [his] shoulders,” but that feeling did not last long. He thought, “I don’t have another job, oh God, weight right back on my shoulders, well let me go home . . . make a couple of phone calls.” He immediately started working a part time job and things began to fall in place from there. That was two years ago. Andrew explained that “a lot of people don’t find their calling or their niche, and I’m glad I have found mine.” He continued to say, “For the first time in my life, I don’t have that burning in my stomach like I’ve got to get up and go to work tomorrow.” Andrew believes he will be an outstanding physical education teacher. In his own words he describes, “I’m athletic, I can communicate with kids, I want to make a difference, I want to do this.”

Andrew and I crossed paths when I taught him APE and gymnastics my second year at the university. He was in the same APE class with Joe. In fact, they knew each other through their involvement in the same sport. Unlike Michelle and Joe, Andrew was very outgoing. He was also a veteran of the university experience. He was returning to college to pursue another degree but expressed to me that he “was going to make the best of it” while he was here. Andrew had serious moments but most of the time he was humorous and playful. He understood a job needed to be done but was not worth doing unless it involved a little bit of fun on his part. However, his playfulness changed as he sat in the student teaching seminar before his student
teaching experience. He realized that business needed to be done and he quickly began to prepare himself professionally. The mischievous Andrew that I remembered had changed his colors like a chameleon. This new Andrew emerged into a person who would make a difference in children’s lives.

When I interviewed Andrew, he always sat in a relaxed position in a chair. He crossed his legs and leaned back as if he didn’t have a care in the world. He was very dramatic, however, in our discussions as his voice would rise and fall as quickly as a song would change a beat. His excitement was contagious, as on many occasions I would find myself so caught up in his experiences that my voice was changing as rapidly as his. In many of our conversations, Andrew would use a variety of metaphors to express what he was thinking. According to Andrew, before he took his leap of faith into teaching, he “couldn’t see the forest through the trees.” Everyone around him told him he should be a teacher but he was focused on making money. He recalled, “I went as far away from [being a teacher] as I possibly could, got the picture so far out of focus that it became in focus.” This was how Andrew described his thoughts and experiences.

Lisa

Lisa traveled through many states to go to college on an athletic scholarship. As she drove away from the fast city life to the quiet rolling hills of the country, she left her mother and stepfather behind to pursue her dream of becoming an elementary school teacher. As long as she could remember, she always wanted to be an elementary school teacher. However, once she started taking classes at the university, she quickly realized that it was extremely difficult to get into the elementary program. With an intense desire to teach, she pursued her teaching interest in a new program. After much deliberation, she decided to teach physical education because as she put it, “I’m athletic and I like to play.” Lisa recalled her physical education experience when she was in high school: “I was the kind of person that loved PE because I was athletic.” Although physical education was an enjoyable part of her schooling experience, she realized that others did not always share her sentiment. She believes though that she can give students a different feeling. As Lisa explained, “I just want to make it to where like even if you don’t like PE, you’ll learn to like it . . . appreciate it . . . not like it everyday . . . just appreciate it to be like okay well . . . PE wasn’t that bad.” Her deep ambition to leave a lasting impression on young minds is remarkable. She explains that “just to feel like they can be in PE and still . . . learn something and still have fun” means a great deal to her in her mission to teach children.
When I first met Lisa, I was new to the university. She was one of my first students in APE class. She was so quiet and timid that I barely heard a peep out of her the entire semester. I pushed her to be boisterous in class and while she was peer teaching. She tried but it was difficult for her. I informed her that she needed to work on getting up in front of her peers and take control of her teaching if she wanted to be a teacher. As the spring semester came, Lisa entered my gymnastics class with a whole new outlook on what she wanted to accomplish as a person and a teacher. Leaving her old quiet, timid self behind, she took the imaginary bull by the horns and made a three hundred and sixty-degree turn in her teaching abilities. Each time she taught a lesson, she was louder, more confident, and aimed to increase her teaching potential. We reflected on her teaching and discussed ways to improve her lessons. What started as a seed, blossomed into a flower that grew to astonishing new heights. During the interviews with Lisa, she never beat around the bush. She answered each question quickly and was ready to move on to the next. She carries a certain air about her that captivates those around her and makes them listen and take notice of what she is saying. She has many facial expressions that tell many stories. In the first interview, Lisa told me about a student who “was calling the aide the ‘b’ word” and she quickly stated, “I was just like, wow!” As her eyes widen, she leaned away from me in a stiff jerky motion with a sense of disbelief that a student could possibly be saying that to a teacher’s aide. Her body language added to Lisa’s unique and expressive personality. In taking the time to share her experiences, she also had a tight schedule to follow. Lisa was still on an athletic scholarship and was required to go to practice. She worked her practice schedule around student teaching, a class at the university, and my interviews. She wore many hats during this experience but managed to juggle them with the utmost care making sure she followed each one through to the fullest extent possible.

Michelle, Joe, Andrew, and Lisa’s experiences are at the heart of this research. Knowing who they are and where they come from aid in understanding those experiences. Likewise, it is important to understand the settings where their experiences took place. The following section describes that context.

**Settings**

This research was conducted at several different public school systems in the area surrounding the university. The schools visited were Seatack High School, Central Middle School, Winslow Middle School, Santrock Elementary School, Big Rock Elementary School,
Villa Elementary School, and Hobbes Elementary School. These schools were spread out as far away as sixty miles and as close as two miles away from the university. The participants in this study were placed at two different settings throughout their student teaching experience. Each student teaching experience lasted approximately eight weeks at each school. Chart 4.1 illustrates each participant's setting while a narrative description of each school follows.

Chart 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Secondary Setting</th>
<th>Elementary Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Seatack High School</td>
<td>Santrock Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Seatack High School</td>
<td>Villa Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Winslow Middle School</td>
<td>Big Rock Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Central Middle School</td>
<td>Hobbes Elementary School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary Setting

Seatack High School is the only high school in Seatack County. The facilities are fairly new with wall-to-wall carpeting, an up-to-date media center, computer lab, and a television, computer, and telephone in every classroom. The gymnasium was spacious but the athletic equipment was limited. When Michelle entered the gymnasium for the first time she said, “This is a pretty nice lookin’ gym.” The outdoor facilities consisted of two tennis courts, a football field, a track, a practice football field, a baseball and softball field, and a soccer and field hockey field. A field house was located behind the school near the track. It contained equipment for several sports such as football, basketball, softball, and tennis. Michelle used the gymnasium and outdoor facilities for the first class in the morning with Joe, then returned for four classes in the afternoon. Joe only used the gymnasium and outdoor facilities for the first two classes of the day.

The health classroom had one door in which to enter and exit. The health books students used were stacked on a shelf in the front of the room. The desks were in seven rows facing the chalkboard. The teacher’s desk was diagonal to the students’ desks with two shelves behind it. A telephone was located behind the door. The computer sat on a rollaway cart in front of the chalkboard, but over to the left side. The television was bolted into the wall just above the
A bulletin board on the back wall contained a football schedule and two posters: one poster promoting abstinence and the other poster had a slogan “don’t drink and drive” on it. Many health teachers shared this particular classroom. Michelle used it for two classes in the morning while Joe used it for four classes in the afternoon.

Central Middle School is the only middle school in Central County. The facilities and equipment are old and outdated. Televisions have turn knobs instead of push buttons, computers resembled old Atari video game units, telephones are not located in every room, and the desks look as if they have been there since the school opened, years ago. The gymnasium is small with bleachers on both sides. The locker rooms have old baskets with the combination locks instead of lockers. The floor was worn and pieces of it are lifting away from the ground. When there are five classes in the gymnasium at one time, the floor can barely be seen instead, a sea of students are spread out everywhere, inching for space to move.

The outdoor facilities are limited and spread out. There was one softball field, a soccer field, a black top, and a fenced in area with six basketball goals. The bus area was also used for some activities such as running and kickball. The football field sits farthest away from the school and is not used for physical education activities. There was a limited amount of equipment which forces some students to wait and stand in line depending on the activity.

The health classroom is a small room filled with desks in straight rows of six facing the chalkboard. There are two teachers desks, one located in front of the class and the other located in the back. The computer was located on an old wooden desk behind the teacher’s desk in the back of the room. There was a shelf with extra health books on it located in the front left corner of the room; however, students had their own health books, which they could take home. There is one door to enter and exit the room. The bulletin board has four posters on it, each dealing with motivational concepts. For example, one says, “Opportunity, some people dream of success . . . while others wake up and work hard at it.” The health classroom was not used everyday. Instead, teachers would use it to show a movie due to insufficient room in the gymnasium on days of inclement weather. Lisa had to use the health classroom a few times due to rain and cold mornings. The use of the health classroom and outdoor facilities went on a rotational basis. Therefore, Lisa rotated to the different outside facilities and the gymnasium during her time at Central Middle School. When Lisa entered the school, she was familiar with its surroundings because she had been there before. However, during our first interview, I asked her what her
thoughts were when she first walked in and she said, “Man, I didn’t realize that it was this bad…they hardly have anything.”

Winslow Middle School is located in Wayne City. The facilities consist of a four story, newly renovated building with security cameras in every hallway, computers and televisions in every classroom, televisions in the hallways, and telephones and new desks in every classroom. After seeing the security cameras and the televisions in the hallway, Andrew said, “[It’s] clean, cool, smelled nice, didn’t smell like the puke dust they put down…it smelled like a nice school.” The gymnasium is small but several other rooms exist for the physical education teachers to use, such as a fitness room with brand new Nautilus equipment, a room used for cooperatives and dance, and endless outdoor facilities. The outdoor facilities consist of a baseball and softball fields, lacrosse and soccer fields, a football field, a practice field, and two sets of tennis courts.

The health classroom is filled with desks facing the dry erase board in the front of the classroom. The teacher’s desk and computer are located in the front right hand corner of the room. Tables are lined up on the back wall under the bulletin board that had the phrase “keys to success” with paper “keys” spread out across the board. A digital clock on the back wall over top of the bulletin board keeps time. Each student has his or her own health book. Two shelves are filled with spiral notebooks and folders for each student and extra health books are located in the front left corner of the room. A blue light on the ceiling, which flashes in case of an emergency for the hearing impaired students, completes the room. Andrew rotated to a different facility with his students weekly. For example, week one he was in health, week two he was in the gymnasium, week three he was in the fitness room, and week four he was in the cooperatives and dance room. This rotation repeated itself after all facilities were used.

**Elementary Setting**

Santrock Elementary School is an older school located in Seatack County. The school is a complete circle except for the gymnasium. In order to get to the gymnasium, one has to follow the exit sign. It is a small gymnasium with equipment piled up against one wall. The walls have drawings of happy faces and chip marks from where the paint has fallen off. Scuffmarks cover the floor as if it has not been swept or cleaned in a long time. The equipment room is filled with equipment to the point where there is little room to move. When Michelle saw the equipment room, she stated, “Oh my gosh, I’m gonna have to do somethin about this.” The gymnasium has no air conditioning so most of the time, a door which leads to the outside is propped open to get
air circulating. The outdoor facilities are large and spread out: a blacktop where the buses dropped off the students, a very large open field, and a large playground area with swings and slides rounded out the outdoor facilities. Michelle utilized several of these areas with her students.

Big Rock Elementary was built in 1999 and is one of the newest schools in Wayne County. When Andrew entered the school, he said, “I’m really fortunate . . . somebody’s watchin’ over me.” The gymnasium is large and spacious with a stage on one side. It has air conditioning, heat, and the walls were bright white with windows at the top of one wall. The sun often shines through the windows and brightens the gymnasium to the point of temporary blindness. The floor shines with a glare as if it were a piece of recently cleaned glass. There is a beeping sound that beeps every minute – part of the school’s alarm system. There is enough equipment for every student. The outdoor facilities are endless but never used by the physical education classes. Andrew stayed in the gymnasium with his students the entire time he was there. He desperately wanted to venture outside but did not dare ask for fear he would upset his cooperating teacher.

Villa Elementary School is a fairly new school also. The gymnasium has wall to wall carpet with bleachers on one side. There is a stage on one side of the gymnasium. It has air conditioning, heat, and the walls are bare. There are small windows on two of the walls. There are restrooms located on one side of the gymnasium so the students did not have to leave the gymnasium to use the restroom. There is more than enough equipment for students to have their own individual piece. The outdoor facilities are also endless but never used during the time Joe was there. There is enough room in the gymnasium that whatever could be done outside can also be accomplished inside. When Joe walked into Villa Elementary for the first time, he said, “I belong here . . . I feel comfortable here.”

Hobbes Elementary School is an older school with no gymnasium. Instead of a gymnasium, students go to the cafeteria for physical education class. When Lisa found out she was going to be teaching in a cafeteria, she expressed, “Why me? This place is too small to teach in . . . the only good thing is I get a two hour break while the kids have lunch.” The cafeteria is small with tables lined up on two sides of the wall. The cafeteria kitchen is on one side and a stage on the other side. The stage is open with a desk and chair in the middle of it. The curtains are often pulled to the side. The physical education equipment is stacked in a small storage closet.
with equipment stacked over top of it. Each day a Kindergarten class uses one half of the cafeteria while the other half is cleaned. A large curtain is pulled out when students eat to provide a barrier between lunch and physical education class. Once lunchtime ends, the curtain is pulled back and tables divided the cafeteria to allow the floor to dry. When the first Kindergarten class is over, the tables are pushed to the side and the entire cafeteria is used again for physical education. The outdoor facilities consisted of several large fields but Lisa never used those while she was teaching.
CHAPTER 5
Participants’ Voices

In this chapter, themes that emerged from the data will be discussed. The following themes are (a) concerns (safety, feelings of being unqualified, finding balance: preservice teachers’ struggles with dividing attention equally among all students), (b) inclusion, (c) emotional rollercoaster, and (d) trying out different strategies to work with students with EBD (High School Level, Middle School Level, Elementary School Level). The “concerns” theme has several underlying themes that the participants expressed throughout their student teaching experience. The safety concern refers to the students without EBD being injured by the students with the EBD label. The concern that focuses on feelings of being unqualified refers to the participants’ responses to their experience teaching students with EBD and whether or not they believe they are qualified to teach students with EBD. The concern of finding balance describes the struggles that the participants encountered while trying to divide their attention equally among all the students.

The inclusion theme revolved around the participants’ thoughts and feelings about including students with EBD in a general education setting. The emotional rollercoaster theme describes the participants’ drastic changes in emotions that they encountered throughout their experience. The trying out different strategies to work with students with EBD focused on the interactions between the participants and the students with EBD that they worked with during their student teaching experience. The interactions that the participants engaged in brought about different teaching strategies that the participants tried with their students with EBD. It is important to mention that you will be looking at the following themes over a sixteen-week time frame.

Concerns

The first concern discussed will focus on safety issues that the participants expressed over their sixteen-week student teaching experience.

Safety

Prior to stepping into the student teaching experience, I was curious about what types of concerns my participants had when working with students with EBD. Lisa, Joe, Michelle, and Andrew were all concerned about safety issues. Lisa expressed, “Yeah, their disorder is like it
has unknown things that can come with it and that can make it unsafe for the other students in the class . . . because you never know what might tick them off.” Due to the unfamiliarity of the disorder, Lisa felt she had to be concerned for the safety of the other students in the class because she did not know what to expect from the students with the EBD label. Joe also felt that he needed to be concerned about the safety of the other students who were not labeled. As his hand clinched his chest, he said, “Safety is the biggest thing, oh yeah, I wouldn’t want to put the other students at risk than that would mean someone else gets harmed.” In talking with Joe about safety, he felt this was a concern because if someone got hurt in the class that he was in charge of, he would be letting “these kids down” and letting “the parents down too.” Feeling that he did not want to be looked down upon, Joe also realized that he can not control everything that goes on in his classroom and working with students with EBD, he explained, “If somebody is going to snap . . . they’re going to snap.” Michelle, on the other hand, mentioned that controlling the students with EBD was something to be concerned about. As her voice deepened with a sense of seriousness, she expressed her thoughts:

If they can’t control their behaviors in a classroom and its hard for you to control them, then it’s gonna be twice as hard when you get them active with other students and they’re running around and playing with equipment, bats whatever.

Michelle figured that by getting the students with EBD active, it would be difficult to control them, which would lead to an unsafe situation in the classroom. From Andrew’s standpoint, he simply stated, “I wouldn’t want them to hurt themselves, any other students, any other teachers” . . . because “that’s all I can see right now.”

After finishing their secondary placements and working with students with EBD for eight weeks, safety was still an issue for Andrew and Lisa. Andrew had several situations with Josh, a student with EBD, where he felt that safety was “still a concern.” As Andrew recalled a situation with Josh and his cooperating teacher, he imitated the different voices, and reenacted what happened and expressed jokingly:

[In Josh’s voice], I wish you would come over here, I’ll kick you in the shins real hard and knock you in the middle of next week, shoot. [Then, in the cooperating teacher’s voice], Josh, I’m gonna have to call your mama. [In Josh’s voice], I wish you would call my mama, she come down here and knock you in your watermelon head.
Lisa too had situations with students with EBD, but the only difference was that Lisa had six EBD students compared to Andrew’s one. Lisa’s response to the concerns about safety were as follows:

Yeah, just like I said, their behavior and everything is always spur of the moment, and you never know what they’re capable of doing or, or what they will do . . . it could be like throwing equipment at a student or it could be tripping, making it to where its really unsafe, that’s always gonna be a concern when I teach those kinds of kids.

Lisa continued to say that she also has a concern of them hurting the other students, yeah because I don’t get to really watch the other students and I feel like the other students wouldn’t tell me either, its like I have to see it or not see it because they’re either scared or depending on how severe they got hurt, they probably wouldn’t tell me.

So not only was Lisa expressing that students with EBD are spontaneous and unpredictable, she was worried that some of the other students would get hurt and she would not see it and in turn get into trouble.

Michelle and Joe however, had a different response to safety being a concern. Michelle explained, after looking back eight weeks, “I didn’t really have [any issue] with safety.” Even though she had a situation with Howard, a student with EBD, she did not seem to think that safety was a concern for her anymore. As Joe shrugged his shoulders, he also expressed, “Safety wasn’t one of my major concerns with the students that I dealt with.” Joe also had two incidences with two students with EBD, Kim and Chris. Kim hit somebody in physical education class with a basketball. When I asked Joe about this, he leaned forward, placed his hand on his face, and shook his head as he responded, “It could’ve been [a] safety [issue] when [Kim hit another girl with] the basketball and she’s pushing, it could’ve led to that, but I didn’t feel that because the incident [just] happened that one time.” As for Chris, Joe did not sense that he was a safety problem. Joe snickered and explained that Chris was “sleeping in class most of the time.”

After finishing the elementary placement and completing their student teaching experience, Andrew, Lisa, Joe, and Michelle commented on their concerns about safety. Andrew explained, “Safety is definitely a concern with this EBD student, definitely.” He elaborated, “They may injure themselves, they may injure someone else, you just don’t know, its very, their behavior is very, emotional behavior or . . . just the behavior in general is very erratic.”
Throughout the sixteen weeks, Andrew discussed how the students with EBD that he worked with were unpredictable which in turn caused him to believe that safety was a big concern for him when working with students with EBD. From Lisa’s experience, she explained, “Safety is a major concern” with the students with EBD that she worked with during her student teaching experience. Lisa sat up and started swinging her arms and legs around when she stated, “When they start hitting or pushing or kicking then you need to sit out and think about what your doing” because she expressed that she did not want the other students “to get harmed.”

When Joe expressed his concern about safety, he reiterated, “I wasn’t worried about that at the high school; the younger kids I’m really worried about it.” Joe described why he was more worried about safety at the elementary level when he said,

David, I had to constantly watch him, especially if I was doing batting when I say safety not as much safety for Josh and David as it is for the other students you know around him I don’t really worry about Josh and David hurting themselves, I’m worried about [them] hurting somebody else.

Going by Joe’s experience, he only had one situation at the high school with Kim and Chris but it was not severe enough for him to consider safety being a major concern like it was with Josh and David at the elementary school. Similar to Joe’s experience, Michelle had two students with EBD, Benjamin and Casey, and her concerns about safety were more focused toward Benjamin than Casey or any of the high school students. While describing Benjamin, Michelle laughed and said he was “really off task” and he “didn’t think about what he was doing, it was just fun to [them], so . . . that’s what he did.” But her laughter quickly changed to a serious note when she explained,

If they’re off task, off the wall, putting other students in danger plus themselves cause they don’t think about what their doing if they’re out just running around, they smack into another kid well they can get hurt [as well as] another kid and myself.

Based on Michelle, Joe, Andrew, and Lisa’s sixteen-week experience working with students with EBD, an interesting pattern formed. Michelle and Joe were at the high school working with two to three students with EBD and were not concerned about safety, however, once they entered the elementary school, both of them saw safety as a concern because they believed that the other students could possibly get hurt. Whereas Andrew and Lisa were at the middle school
working with students with EBD, Andrew had one and Lisa had six. They always voiced the concern of safety because the students that they worked with were unpredictable.

Based on the characteristics of students with EBD, it is understandable why safety would be a concern to the participants. By worrying about the other students getting hurt in the participants’ class, it suggests that the participants are associating characteristics of violence and students with EBD. With this association of characteristics, it is important to mention that students with EBD can be grouped into two categories that tend to overlap: internalizing and externalizing disorders (Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 1999). Internalizing behaviors include, “problems with self that include worries, fears, somatic complaints, and social withdrawal” (Coleman, 1996, p. 25). Externalizing behaviors include, “aggression, over-activity, disobedience, temper tantrums, and delinquency” (Coleman, 1996, p. 25). Other descriptions of externalizing behavior refers to being “uncontrollable, aggressive, acting out, and conduct disorder” (Coleman, 1996, p. 25). Based on these descriptions, the participants are relating their initial safety concerns to be focused around students with EBD who exhibit externalizing behaviors.

Feelings of Being Unqualified

Prior to the student teaching experience, all participants had only one Adapted Physical Education (APE) class during their undergraduate studies. Even after having that particular class, however, Lisa, Joe, Michelle, and Andrew still expressed their concern of not being qualified to teach students with EBD in a general education setting. When Lisa discussed her concern about being qualified as she shrugged her shoulders and said, “I’m not experienced and I haven’t taught any of them at all.” Her lack of experience made her question her ability of whether or not she could teach students with EBD. Joe also discussed his concern of not being qualified because he thought he needed to know more about teaching students with EBD. He stated, “I wish I had a little more knowledge about teaching those kinds of kids.” Joe indicated that he could never learn too much but he definitely needed to know more about teaching students with EBD. When Andrew discussed his concern for being qualified to teach students with EBD, he candidly said, “I’m not qualified, there’s no way one class could prepare me for this.” Andrew explained, “More classes need to be implemented for all PE students . . . ‘cause I don’t think one class is enough.” Similar to Andrew, Michelle felt that “one class for one semester [would] never prepare [her] enough to deal with what the real world’s about cause . . . [the student teachers]
never dealt with those students.” So before starting their student teaching experience, participants recognized that one APE class was not enough to prepare them as well as make them feel as though they were qualified to teach students with EBD.

After teaching students with EBD for eight weeks, the participants’ concern of being qualified seemed to change due to their experience. After working with one student with EBD, Andrew said, “I don’t think I’m qualified . . . I mean, I’m a PE teacher.” Andrew explained why he did not think he was qualified by saying, “I can’t diagnose disorders and if I can’t diagnose [them] I definitely don’t know how to treat them.” He explained that he did not doubt his ability as a PE teacher; however, he had doubts about his ability to teach students with EBD. He explicitly stated, “Doubts are raised about whether or not I can teach emotionally disturbed student in PE, or behavioral challenged student in PE. There are some doubts.” In questioning his abilities, Andrew strongly believes there should be an APE specialist working with students with EBD instead of relying on a regular physical education teacher. Similar to Andrews’s response, Joe expressed the following:

I’m not qualified in that area to do that, although I know in my heart I want to help this person but maybe I can’t, maybe I don’t have the proper training, I need to know how these kids respond, what gets them going, and I need to know that.

Joe also doubted his ability due to the lack of training he received but that did not stop him from wanting to help students regardless of their disability. With the deepest sincerity, Joe said, “I feel like I can help most kids” but he would not settle for most kids if he were going to do his job correctly. In working with students with EBD, Joe reached out with his hands frantically grabbing at the air and said to me,

I feel like I’m grasping, I’m just grasping for what . . . do I gotta do to reach this person, I don’t have the resources, I don’t know where to go, I try to get them as a person and taught them the best way I know how, I don’t have all the knowledge and the experience to deal with students like this that have problems.

Joe’s expression validated his concern of not being qualified to teach students with EBD. Even though his strong desire was to teach all children, he quickly realized after working with two students with EBD that he was lacking in knowledge and experience when teaching them.

Unlike Andrew and Joe, Lisa and Michelle’s concern about being qualified to teach students with EBD quickly faded after the first eight weeks. It was no longer a concern for Lisa
or Michelle because they both recalled how they handled different situations with students with EBD made them feel like they were qualified. Interestingly enough, the concern of being qualified made a drastic change for Michelle as she entered her elementary placement. During our interview, Michelle explained that she felt more qualified to teach students with EBD at the high school because she felt she effectively “handled things.” However, when I asked her about teaching students with EBD at the elementary level, she immediately jumped away from me, shook her head and without hesitation said, “No, no, I don’t feel I’m qualified to teach . . . children with that label because I don’t know much about it for this age.”

After completing the student teaching experience, Lisa, Joe, Michelle, and Andrew discussed whether or not being qualified to teach students with EBD was still a concern. For Lisa, she informed me that she felt more qualified after completing her student teaching experience so she was no longer concerned about being qualified to teach students with EBD. She explained, “I had one class in my program that helped me, but if I didn’t have that class, I would” still be concerned about being qualified to teach students with EBD. Joe on the other hand had a different response. As he sat up in his seat and stared directly in my eyes, he said, I’ve got mixed feelings on this because I mean a specialist, are you still gonna know everything ‘cause all kids are different. You have to care, you gotta care about kids and I feel that’s where I’m at I know I’m qualified for caring.

As Joe continued to explain, “If I had a little more background knowledge it would help.” However, he contemplated whether or not it was a concern but he recognized that he needed to learn more about teaching students with EBD. He was qualified as a caring teacher, however he was not sure if he was qualified to teach students with EBD. Michelle had a different spin at the end of her experience. She told me, “I don’t feel it’s a concern because I feel I’m getting to know the kids.” Michelle continued to explain:

I don’t think I need any extra education on how to work with [them] cause each child’s different. You can get all the education in the damn world and there could be one out of a million child that’s the only child that’s gonna act this way and then what? I ain’t learned shit about that child, so I don’t feel you just go by the child.

From Michelle’s experience, she changed her concern of being qualified several times but in the end she felt as though if she got to know the student well enough and handled the situation, and she considered herself qualified to teach students with EBD. Andrew however, continued his
concern of being qualified throughout the entire experience. He plainly said, “I’m still concerned about it, am I qualified enough . . . to teach students with EBD . . . I don’t know, am I confident enough? ” However, Andrew indicated his concern would probably vanish with more experience.

I found it interesting that Michelle and Lisa felt more qualified to teach students with EBD than Andrew and Joe. I believe that one APE class is not enough to prepare preservice teachers to work with students with EBD as well as other disabilities. I think it would be helpful to have preservice teachers work with students with special needs in an actual setting to give them more experience and an opportunity to explore different strategies before they enter their student teaching experience.

Finding Balance: Preservice Teachers’ Struggles With Dividing Attention Equally Among All Students

After discussing the safety concern and the concern of being qualified to teach students with EBD, the participants mentioned one more concern. This particular concern was focused on the idea that students with EBD require more attention and if a teacher were to give them the attention that was needed, they would be taking away from the other students without disabilities. This became apparent for Joe and Andrew. Based on Joe’s caring personality, if he noticed a student who needed some extra help, he would “spend . . . too much time” trying to help that particular student. As Joe explained the downfall to helping that particular student, he said, “I’ve got to learn how to spread my time out so I’m not taking away from the other students.” Joe encountered this situation during his practicum teaching and felt compelled to be concerned about spending too much time with students with EBD and taking time away from the other students. When discussing this concern with Andrew, his response came from a different angle than Joe’s. Andrew’s concern stemmed from his belief that students with EBD have to be given his “full attention the whole time.” This caused Andrew to be concerned because he wanted to become a teacher so he could “teach all kids” but he was unsure at this point if he would be able to do that. He explained, “If I’m spending all of my time with an EBD student than what’s gonna happen with the other so called “normal” students. I’m taking away from those other students and that’s not what teaching is all about.”

Unlike Joe and Andrew, Lisa and Michelle did not express at this time that they were concerned about spending too much time with students with EBD and taking away from the
other students. This quickly changed for Lisa though, after her first eight weeks of working with students with EBD. Lisa bluntly stated, “I had to spend more time with them and coach them and motivate them.” She explained that she had to keep her eyes on the students with EBD because all it would take was a second and something would happen. When I asked Lisa about the other students, she put her head down and softly said, “they’re neglected.” She described how she thought the other students felt by saying, “I know they’re feeling like, ‘Man she pays all of her attention to these kids. Does she like them more than she [likes] me?’” When I observed Lisa at the middle school, it was obvious that she had her hands full. In one class, she had four students with EBD. She constantly spent her time with those four students because if she did not, a fight or argument would erupt. Lisa admitted, “I’m taking away from the other students, and that’s not my fault, but I can’t help it.” Lisa felt trapped in a no win situation and decided it was safer to keep an eye on those four students because “the other kids will do what you tell them.”

After working with students with EBD at the middle school level, Andrew realized that students with EBD weren’t just taking away from the other students. He stated, “They take away from the teacher, they take away from themselves.” Andrew did not realize until after working with Josh that not only would he be giving him more attention but also everyone else would be affected including himself. When observing Andrew working with Josh, he spent most of his time talking to Josh. When I discussed my observations with Andrew, he stated, “I have no choice because he’ll do anything to get attention whether it’s positive or negative, but mostly negative.”

When Joe discussed his concern about taking away from the other students, he expressed, “It bothers me, it bothers me that I can’t have one on one . . . contact” with students with EBD. The pitch of his voice dropped as his eyebrows lifted when he said, “I’m worried that I will give too much of my time to some of the kids that needed the help and take away from the other kids’ time.” Joe’s emotions were written all over his face as we continued to discuss this concern. I noticed that during my observations of his interactions with his two students with EBD, Chris and Kim, he spent a large portion of his time checking on them. When I asked him about the amount of time he spent with Chris, his response was hostile as he said with a loud voice:

I was like, damn I got all these other students in here that I’m trying to deal with so I was aware of that, so I didn’t wanna spend my whole time just on Chris, although I know he needed my whole time on him.
Joe explained that he tried to work with all the students but it became difficult because he was trying so hard to reach all of his students. In discussing how difficult this was, he recalled how he felt after trying to get Kim involved in a game with the other students. He voiced the following:

Damn, it was like I was in a no win situation ‘cause I was trying to get her active out there, participating with everybody else but then I’m taking away from the other students cause her and Amanda [a friend of Kim’s] sitting out there ain’t doing a thing.

Joe was frustrated at this point because he wanted to get Kim involved but Kim was not always a willing participant in Joe’s plans.

Michelle, however, had a totally different outlook on this concern. Instead of feeling like students with EBD take away from other students, she informed me that “they add to the class or even add to a gym.” She believed that students with EBD added to the class by “making little comments about whatever we’re talking about.” She explained that based on her experience at the high school, she “didn’t give them more attention and things got better.” This seemed a little unclear for me because during the times that I observed Michelle, she spent more of her time talking and dealing with situations with her three students with EBD. When I questioned her about giving more attention to Ashley, Howard, and Chris, she quickly responded, “I don’t feel that I spent too much time with [them].” After a long pause, she acknowledged, “I do with some of [them].” She went on to explain that due to the situation she was in at the high school with her cooperating teacher, she gave those students some attention. She stated, “As far as [students with EBD] looking for some extra attention, I was able to give it to [them] more because I needed that extra [attention] while I was there because [of what] I was going through.” Michelle and her cooperating teacher were not getting along during her time at the high school, which placed Michelle in a stressful predicament. With tears in her eyes, Michelle’s voiced trembled as she described her feelings about giving more attention to students with EBD:

They seek . . . some extra attention and whatever they can get, they gonna grab a hold of it and take it for a ride, that’s how I was whatever the hell I could get up there . . . I was taking that shit, ‘cause I wasn’t getting much and so those kids gave me what I needed and that was enough to make it, just those kids.

So through her high school experience, Michelle felt as though Ashley, Howard, and Chris helped her survive her dilemma. In this survival, I believe it was difficult for Michelle to
comprehend just how much she took away from the other students because of her dependency on those three students with EBD.

After completing the elementary experience, Joe, Andrew, Lisa, and Michelle discussed their concerns about taking away from other students to give more attention to students with EBD. During Joe’s time at the elementary school, he worked closely with David and Josh and reviewed his concern. As he shifted in his seat, he turned to me and said in a ruffled voice:

I’m taking away from the other students ‘cause I feel myself when I’m doing lessons like batting or golf, taking away from the other students ‘cause I’m constantly with Josh, I’m constantly with David, and I got nineteen, twenty other students there that are like, What about me? So it’s not fair to the other students.

Joe expressed that he was constantly with David because he knew if he turned his back to help another student, “in a split second . . . David [might have whacked] somebody with that club.” Joe did not feel comfortable enough to leave David or Josh unattended due to the possibility of someone getting hurt. Experiencing this uneasy feeling, Joe grabbed his chest and explained, “I can feel it when it’s happening, I mean I’m aware of it.” This bothered Joe because he wanted to help the other students but it seemed impossible for him to do so when David or Josh were in the class.

Andrew also acknowledged that it was a “big concern” taking away from the other students and giving more attention to students with EBD. However, he stated, “Not that I’m spending so much extra time with EBD students, maybe a little bit extra time . . . but not, not overboard.” After observing Andrew teaching Shawn, a third grade student with EBD, I asked him to elaborate on what he meant by a little bit extra time. Andrew explained that in the beginning when he first started teaching Shawn, he ignored him. Andrew quickly learned that this was not the answer to his problem. After several weeks, Andrew went from ignoring Shawn to spending large amounts of time with him until the last two weeks where he finally maintained a balance between spending time with Shawn and the other students.

Similar to Joe and Andrew, Lisa was also concerned about taking away from the other students. She mentioned that she spends “too much time” with Justin and it takes time away from the other students. During the times when I observed Lisa teaching Justin, she spent much of her time with Justin. When I questioned Lisa about the amount of time she spent with him, she laughed and said, “Yeah, I know I spend way too much time with him but I can’t help it, he’s off
the wall.” She continued to explain, “Yeah, that’s a concern especially along the lines of like no aide, if there was an aide then I wouldn’t have to pay more attention to him as much.” Lisa believed that if she had more help in working with Justin then she would not have to be concerned about taking time away from the other students. However, Justin did not have an aide so Lisa felt like she had to devote most of her time with him and not the other students.

Like the others, Michelle discussed her concern about taking away from other students at the elementary school. Michelle recalled her experience with Benjamin:

You always have to watch them to see what their doing ’cause there were times that I would be paying attention to the class in general, and all of a sudden a kid [came] up and told me, that [Benjamin] hit so and so with the ball.

Michelle explained that Benjamin and Casey always had to be watched and given “a little extra attention” and she admitted that “on occasion” they did take time away from the other students.

Inclusion

Because the participants would be working with students with EBD, I found it important to ask them what they thought about including students with EBD in a regular education setting. My inquiry comes from many discussions on the controversy of inclusion and students with EBD (Kauffman & Smucker, 1995; Lewis, Chard, & Scott, 1994; MacMillan, Gresham, & Forness, 1996; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). Proponents of inclusion believe that all students with disabilities should be educated in a general education setting regardless of their disabilities. MacMillan, Gresham, and Forness (1996) raised the issue that the needs of all students with EBD were not being met by including them in general education settings. Because the participants were teaching students with EBD in a full inclusive environment, I believe that it was essential to see if their experiences would change their views on inclusion.

Throughout the entire student teaching experience, Lisa and Michelle revealed that they believed that every student should be included regardless of their disability especially students with EBD. Before Lisa started her student teaching experience, she stated, “All kids should be included regardless.” She described how she would feel if she had a disability:

If I had a disability, the worst thing that you could do to me is take me away from everyone else cause then I’ll feel even more irregular than I am and I wouldn’t want to feel that way cause I already have a lot of stuff to battle with.
Lisa explained that not including her would make “everything worse” instead of better so based on her personal belief about inclusion she believes every student should be included. After teaching students with EBD for eight weeks, I asked Lisa about her thoughts on inclusion again. She shared her thoughts about inclusion by saying, “Yeah, they should be included.” Lisa informed me that “they should be a part of the whole thing. [She felt] like [they had] been separated too long.” Lisa believed that separating the students into an adapted physical education class would cause more problems for students with EBD because “they have problems working socially with other people.” As she crossed her arms and shook her head from side to side, Lisa clearly stated, “They should all be included.”

In the last interview with Lisa, she expressed her unwavering thoughts about inclusion yet again. Lisa had been working with students with EBD for sixteen weeks and strongly stated, “They should all be included.” When I asked for her to explain, she looked at me with a smile and said, “They have a hard time adapting to social environments that are around other people and PE gives them the chance to . . . PE is a time where you have to be on the same team. You have to play together . . . its helps them.” Lisa continued to conclude that if students with EBD needed to be placed in an APE class “then the regular kids need to be in the special adapted PE class to meet everyone’s needs.”

Resembling Lisa’s thoughts on inclusion, Michelle also believed that students with EBD should be included in a regular PE class. Michelle’s thoughts come from the religious side of her that she does not let many people discover. She told me she believes “completely in God” and she explained that God, “creates everybody disability or not.” She explained, “It’s only right to be with students of all abilities whether you’re disabled or not.” Based on Michelle’s religious beliefs, she firmly stated, “We’re in a world together why can’t we be in a classroom together.”

After teaching students with EBD for eight weeks, Michelle and I revisited her thoughts on inclusion. Her response on inclusion was short and precise, “Oh, I’d definitely include them cause like I say, you have to have that in a class. It gives it diversity and it makes things different.” Due to Michelle’s strong beliefs on inclusion, she continued to emphasize the importance of inclusion. Prior to her teaching students with EBD at the elementary level, she said, “All kids deserve a chance and if your working with people of different abilities, [it doesn’t] matter. Just ‘cause you had a label don’t mean you shouldn’t be included.” Michelle explained that just because students with disabilities have labels does not mean they are “any
better or any worse than anybody else.” At the end of Michelle’s student teaching experience, we discussed inclusion one final time. When I asked her what she thought about inclusion after working sixteen-weeks with students with EBD, she grinned, chuckled, and said, “I felt that at the beginning not knowing anything about the kids, I thought yeah, that’s the right thing to put all -mix [them] together, and after teaching [them], I definitely believe they should be included. They’re no different than anybody else.”

Contrary to Lisa and Michelle, Andrew and Joe’s thoughts on inclusion were not as clear-cut. Throughout both of their experiences, they questioned their thoughts on inclusion. In Andrew’s first interview, he said, “I would like to have everybody mainstreamed. Is it a perfect world? It’s not. I don’t know what’s best.” In the beginning, Andrew wanted to include students with EBD in a regular PE class. However, he stated that there needed to be an APE specialist and an APE class so the students with EBD could work with someone who was more qualified in meeting their needs. After working with Josh for eight weeks, Andrew came to the conclusion that “you should try to include them” but also have an APE specialist. During Andrew’s experience working with students with EBD, he did not work with an APE specialist or have an APE class. Andrew explained that there should be “some form of inclusion but also some form of individual work.” He decided after working with Josh that the best way to work with students with EBD “should be done on an individual basis.”

Shortly after Andrew entered his elementary placement, he openly shared his thoughts on inclusion:

My thoughts on inclusion have turned to think that it’s really hard to do with everyone and that’s what I’m finding that I think that’s where I’m gonna go more than any other direction is that to include everybody is probably not the best idea to do it. What’s the best way? I don’t know.

Throughout the rest of Andrew’s experience, he contemplated about including students with EBD. At one point, Andrew expressed, “I have mixed emotions about it all.” At another point, he said, “Is inclusion best for everyone? I don’t think so.” After struggling with his conscience on inclusion for sixteen weeks, Andrew revealed his feelings like a hand full of cards. He said, “I think some students need not to be included, I just think that it’s for their benefit for the rest of the students who are included in the class, and for the teacher.”
Similar to Andrew, Joe thought students with EBD “deserve to be in the class with regular students.” Joe believed that students without disabilities “should not have the opportunity coming to a regular class with students with behavioral problems.” However, Joe quickly changed his mind after working eight weeks at the high school with Kim and Chris. Joe explained, “Beforehand, I thought that all kids should be included in PE” but after working with Kim he did not feel that it was benefiting her to be in a regular PE class. He said, “I feel [there should be some form of] inclusion [but only] to a certain extent.” With Kim in mind, Joe expressed how he would approach inclusion, “I would . . . not even include some of these students in the first place, but then when it’s time for you to include these students, have an aide to make the transition easier.” After working with Kim, Joe felt strongly about not including everyone before they were ready because he believed Kim was not benefiting from being included in a regular PE class.

As Joe entered Villa Elementary School, he remarked, “It just depends on the person, I don’t think you could just say specifically that everyone [who] has a disability should be included.” Like Andrew, Joe had a difficult time trying to decide if including students with EBD was the right decision. Things became more difficult for Joe after he worked with David and Josh at the elementary school. First Joe said, “I feel like they definitely need to be included back mainstreamed. There comes a point now whether that point is in sixth grade or tenth or eleventh.” Then, within a matter of seconds, he said, “I’m not convinced one way or the other on this because I feel like they need to be mainstreamed with the other students.”

Battling with his thoughts, I tried to clarify what he already shared with me. Based on Joe’s experience with Kim, he believed that she should not be included in a regular PE class but mainstreamed back in later when she had an aide or more support during her transition. However, based on Joe’s experience with David and Josh, Joe said, “At the elementary trying to include everyone and have teachers aides, have the support in there.” So, Joe’s dilemma revolved around the individual student with EBD and when it was appropriate for that individual to be included in a regular PE setting. As Joe firmly stated, “All along I feel like inclusion, there needs to be inclusion at some point.”

It is obvious to me that there is still a controversy when it comes to inclusion. By following the participants throughout their student teaching experience, I still see reasons why students with EBD should and should not be included in a general education setting. If teacher
preparation programs are not properly preparing preservice teachers to work with students with special needs then those programs are doing an injustice to future teachers, especially future physical education teachers. Preservice teachers will continue to struggle with working with students with disabilities as long as teacher education programs send preservice teachers out into the profession without the proper training.

**Emotional Rollercoaster**

Throughout the student teaching experience, the participants experienced numerous feelings when they taught students with EBD. Before Lisa started teaching at Central Middle School, she boldly expressed, “I was scared out of my pants, like, feelings that I wasn’t gonna do a good job, feeling that I wouldn’t have always the right comebacks with these kids and they would just walk all over me.” I anticipated that Lisa would be a little nervous because most student teachers are before they start teaching in general. She explained why she was so scared: “I was scared because I don’t know anything about these kinds of students and what ticks them off.”

Shortly after teaching students with EBD at Central Middle School, Lisa talked about how she felt. She recalled, “A lot of times I was scared because when situations would come up, they would always be sudden, you never know what was going to happen.” This took a toll on Lisa because she felt as though working with James, Esua, Laura, and Lucas “took some of [her] energy away and some of [her] enthusiasm away.” Some days Lisa would ask, “Man, do I have to go out there?” before she left the locker room to go teach her second period class. With a big sigh, Lisa explained that the students with EBD, “made [her] sometimes not want to teach or go out there.” However, other times she expressed that “when they act right and they’re good and everything’s great, I am very excited.” Lisa described how students with EBD made her feel like she was constantly riding on “an emotional rollercoaster.” When I asked her what she meant, she said, “I’m sad one day, happy the next day and upset and frustrated and all kinds of stuff like each day.”

In observing Lisa at the middle school, I had the opportunity to watch this “emotional rollercoaster” in action. I recalled one morning when Lisa was taking roll and she turned to me and said, “James isn’t here. Yes!” and she smiled with a huge grin on her face. Her grin quickly changed to a solemn face with no expression as James came running out of the locker room late. As class continued, Lisa was constantly telling James to “come on” so he would participate.
instead of just standing there talking. Throughout the class, Lisa continued to encourage James, and James continued to ignore Lisa. After class, I asked Lisa about how she felt when she thought James was absent and she said, “I wouldn’t have to deal with him and it would be much easier.” I asked her to explain and she stated, “I don’t like having those kinds of kids in class because I’m paying more attention to them than the other kids…I’m frustrated and I feel like they are creating an unsafe environment.”

The next time I saw Lisa, her emotions were totally different. All of her students were participating and she was excited. As I stood there and watched the class, Lisa practically looked as if she had seen a ghost. She could not believe that all of her students were following directions and participating. When I spoke to her after class, she was filled with laughter and expressed, “Wow, I can’t believe what I was seeing. James was doing what he was supposed to be doing, Laura was doing what she was supposed to be doing. I’m so happy.” Based on my observations, it seemed that Lisa’s emotions relied on what the students with EBD were doing in class. Lisa confirmed my thoughts when she explained that the students do, in fact, effect her moods when they come to class. She described, “When they come out and they’re all sad, upset and being mean and off task, it makes me mad.” However, Lisa explained, “They make me sad [but] not all the time. They can also make me really excited.”

When Lisa left the middle school and went to the elementary school, I asked her about her thoughts and feelings about teaching students with EBD at the elementary level. Lisa simply said, “In the middle school I was kinda frustrated because I felt like I couldn’t focus on the other kids and now I focus on everybody and those kids with the labels.” Lisa seemed to think that it would be “easier” and she would not be as frustrated as she was at the middle school.

Lisa’s thoughts of “it seems easier” to work with students with EBD at the elementary level quickly changed after her first couple of classes with Justin, an eight year old child with EBD. After watching Justin in action, I spoke to Lisa after class and asked her about the feelings she was going through after teaching Justin. With a swift turn of the head Lisa said, “I don’t know, this class makes me want to pull my hair out. I’ve got to ignore him or it would be Justin’s class.” She clarified by saying, “It’s hard to focus on the rest of the class if I pay attention to Justin all the time.” Lisa was struggling with some of the familiar feelings of frustrations that she had at the middle school, however, she was not experiencing any feelings of excitement.
At the end of Lisa’s experience, I asked her to tell me about her thoughts and feelings after teaching Justin at the elementary school. After a long pause, Lisa said, “Just feeling frustrated because, like, his bad behaviors.” Lisa explained that she would not “get frustrated all day like [when she] was in middle school.” The time she spent with Justin frustrated her but as soon as the class was over she would say, “Okay, well than that’s that.” Lisa did not seem to allow Justin to affect her emotions as much as she did with the EBD students at the middle school. When I asked Lisa about her overall feelings about working with students with EBD, she perked up and said with a smile on her face, “Yeah, it’s good, I like working with [them], some days more than others, but some days less than others. I would work with them.”

Similar to Lisa, Andrew was nervous about teaching students with EBD. Andrew explained, “I’m really not sure how to handle those kinds of kids because I’ve never worked with any of them before. This will definitely be a learning experience.” Despite Andrew’s nervousness, he expressed, “But I’m really excited about it.” After Andrew’s experience at Winslow Middle School, we discussed his thoughts and feelings about teaching. Andrew’s response was as follows:

Some days are better than others. You really have to take each day one day at a time because some days those kids are gonna be alright, some days those kids are gonna be off the wall and those are the days that they’re gonna disrupt your class.

Depending on the day, Andrew expressed that he could be either “frustrated or happy, it just depends.” When I asked Andrew about Josh he explained, “I had many different emotions.” Prior to Josh entering the class, Andrew said, ‘Ten minutes before class started it was like ‘oh, oh, what’s gonna happen today?’” This was a daily thought for Andrew.

When I observed Andrew teaching Josh, I recall a day when Josh did not want to dress out in his uniform for physical education class. When Josh came out of the locker room with his school clothes still on, Andrew turned to me and said, “Here we go again. This is a problem everyday. He talks or doesn’t want to dress out.” Andrew talked to Josh and Josh returned to the locker room to change into his PE uniform. Shortly after Andrew got the class active, Josh returned from the locker room with his PE uniform overtop of his school clothes. Andrew shook his head and said to me, “Are you serious? Are you kidding me? Is he wearing that?” Andrew laughed and spoke with Josh again. As the class continued, Josh finally changed into his PE uniform and participated with the class. Within minutes, Josh was sitting out of the activity for
hitting a girl in class. Josh sat out for the remainder of the class. Andrew spoke to him about his behavior in the locker room.

After class, I asked Andrew about how he felt about teaching Josh today. Andrew said, “I’m really frustrated with Josh right now; he isn’t working well with others and it makes me angry.” I asked Andrew if this was the only time that he felt angry working with Josh. He clarified that he has been “angry a couple of times.” Andrew explained,

It’s frustrating, I [don’t] know how else to go about reaching this child and my way of trying to pull him in and getting him hooked into a lesson pissed him off even more and it’s frustrating to me that I [can’t] communicate with him.

He continued to express, “It’s very frustrating [on] a day to day basis, up and down, everyday.” Based on my observations, Andrew had more bad days than good. Andrew confirmed my observations by saying, “The good days weren’t as many as the bad days.” Andrew did however, have some good days with Josh.

Andrew told me that Josh came into class after having a bad class the day before and did an outstanding job. With an excited voice, he explained, “He did everything right, I was amazed. He dressed out, he followed directions, he helped hand out papers. He spoke at the appropriate times, just unreal.” Andrew described how his cooperating teacher and he took Josh down to the EBD specialist and told her how great he did in class and she gave him a big hug. Andrew said, “I was so happy for him but I was also saddened because he probably doesn’t get a hug anywhere else.” He continued to explain, “I feel like that’s something every child should get everyday from a guardian, from a parent, and he’s not getting it and I can see why he acts the way he does sometimes.” Andrew’s emotions fluctuated from excited to sad in a matter of minutes.

When discussing his overall thoughts and feelings about working with Josh, Andrew stated:

My emotions get involved on [a] minute by minute basis. If [Josh] comes out and he’s already dressed [in his uniform] for class, [it] might be an alright day. [However,] by the time he walks over to me and tells me that he’s gonna kick me in my shins, it goes back down the hill again. It can be a positive thing dealing with Josh [but] within the same class period, very negative, very frustrating, very sad.
After Andrew left the middle school and began his elementary experience at Big Rock, I asked him to tell me about his feelings toward teaching students with EBD at the elementary level. He quickly responded, “I feel cautiously optimistic.” I asked him why and he explained, “I [don’t] know what to expect from these kids. I know its gonna be different but I don’t have any expectations.” Andrew described how he “felt at home at the middle school” and he was unsure how things would be at the elementary level.

After several weeks at the elementary school, Andrew started experiencing “mixed emotions” about teaching students with EBD. Andrew was experiencing similar thoughts and feelings as he did at the middle school. I asked him to explain and he stated, “Frustrated, happy, angry, apprehensive.” As he continued to explain, his eyebrows crunched downward and his head jerked forward; he said, “Why can’t he just be like everybody else? God oh mighty, what am I gonna have to do differently today to make him successful in class? How far above and beyond am I gonna have to go?” These were the thoughts and feelings that Andrew experienced while he was working with Shawn. Andrew said, “Most days, it was tough working with Josh” but it was “even tougher to work with Shawn” because he only saw him “twice a week.”

When I observed Andrew teaching Shawn, I witnessed Andrew’s gamut of emotions in action. Within a thirty-minute class with Shawn, Andrew went from being frustrated when Shawn was talking uncontrollably to happy when Shawn was quiet and participating properly. I asked Andrew about his emotions and he explained, “I get really frustrated because I don’t know what to do with him. I’ve tried ignoring him but he keeps on talking.” He continued to say, “He’s fine when he’s doing something that he’s good at [and] that makes me happy because at least he’s on task for a while.”

Andrew’s mix of emotions continued throughout his time at the elementary school. However, he did experience a “successful feeling” when Shawn came to class and raised his hand to speak, listened while Andrew spoke, and stayed on task the entire class period.

When I observed this on the last day Andrew taught Shawn, I watched Andrew lift his arms above his head, jump in the air, and yell, “Yes!” As he continued, he laughed and said, “Now I know I can reach these kids although it only took me eight weeks to do it.” During our last interview, I asked Andrew about his overall thoughts and feelings toward teaching students with EBD. He immediately replied, “I feel a little better. I feel a little more confident that I may
be able to handle EBD kids.” Though he felt better in the end, Andrew rode the emotional rollercoaster throughout his experience.

Comparable to Lisa and Andrew, Joe expressed his initial thoughts and feelings about teaching students with EBD. “I [have] mixed emotions. I was anxious and excited, but I was really nervous. I haven’t dealt with any of those kinds of kids before.” During Joe’s experience at Seatack High School, he worked with two students with EBD, Kim, in physical education and Chris in health. Within the first week, Joe had a situation with Chris slamming his textbook on the desk. Prior to Chris slamming the book, Joe said to him, “There’s nothing wrong with getting ahead. Go ahead and start reading it.” By the time Joe took a few steps away from Chris’s desk, Chris slammed the book on the desk and mumbled. Joe couldn’t understand what he said but his reaction told a story in itself. As Joe gave me a look out of the corner of his eyes, he crouched his shoulders inward and grabbed his chest and said, “Boy it was just eating me up right there inside.” Joe’s response to Chris’s outburst was instantaneous. He could actually feel himself “start to get worked up inside.” He expressed, “I don’t think I got red or anything or I don’t think I let the student [s] see that I was mad inside.” Joe’s first encounter with a student with EBD did not seem to be a pleasant one.

During Joe’s experience at the high school, his emotions went through trials and tribulations. I recalled one occasion where I observed him teaching Kim in PE. Joe wanted to get Kim active in an ultimate frisbee game and she did not want to play. Joe tried several times to get her motivated but each time she would cause a confrontation with another student. Finally he gave Kim and Amanda a frisbee to throw on the sidelines while the other students played games.

When I asked Joe about how he felt, his response was, “It was frustrating cause I’m like durn, I get her active and she starts causing problems with other kids, it’s like I’m fighting a losing battle.” He continued to say, “If her and Amanda aren’t together, Kim didn’t want to do [anything] but when I put [them] together, [all] they wanna do is talk so that takes away from the other students.” Joe was flustered because he was having trouble finding a solution to his problem, which was trying to get Kim active with the other students without having her cause conflicts or just refusing to participate. This was a constant battle of Joe’s throughout the time he worked with Kim. Joe described on several occasions, “I would tell her sometimes to move around, my goodness, and it was like pulling teeth ‘cause you keep on and on and on and its like

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damn, it’s very frustrating.” However, on other occasions, he said, “Depending on the day, she would joke around with me and I enjoyed that.”

After Joe’s experience at the high school, I asked him about his thoughts and feelings about teaching Kim and Chris. Joe said, “I was relieved. I’m glad I had a chance to meet the kids that I worked with and I enjoyed working with the kids, although at times, it was frustrating for me.” I asked him to elaborate on his frustrations and he explained, “Part of me feels like these kids choose the way they want to be. I know that they have issues and I understand that but that’s just what I think.”

After leaving the high school, Joe went to Villa Elementary School. He worked with two students with EBD, Josh and David. Joe was excited about teaching at the elementary level. He expressed, “I’m excited about working with the younger kids. I feel I can reach them better than the high school kids.” When I asked Joe about his feelings toward teaching Josh and David, he stated, “I’m not sure what to expect from them. I’ve only seen them a few times. I just don’t know.” Joe’s uncertainty about Josh and David became obvious after a few short weeks.

Joe encountered many frustrating situations with David and only a few with Josh. He stated, “It was more challenging with David than Josh.” Joe did not have the opportunity to work much with Josh because he was frequently absent. David, on the other hand, was in class the majority of the time that Joe was at the elementary school. Joe also experienced a few “good days . . . happy days where [he] was shocked” about how well David or Josh did during class.

Recalling a good day, Joe explained how David was following directions without any outbursts. David was working on kicking when his ball went into the bleachers. He could not reach it so Joe went over to assist him. Joe lifted David up to get his ball and on his way back down to placing him down on the ground, Joe suspended David in the air and said, “[You’re] Superman.” With a huge smile on Joe’s face, he recalled, “Oh, he loved that. I did too cause I’m trying [to] have fun with him.” Joe enjoyed working with David but he did not feel like he was making “much of a connection” with him because of the “limited amount of time that [he’s with] them.” Joe explained that it was “tough only having one hour a week.” In Joe’s opinion, one hour a week with “them made that virtually impossible” for him to “make any impact” that he wanted to make with David and Josh. This was frustrating to Joe. Not only was he frustrated working with both David and Josh, but he was also frustrated that he did not have enough time to work with them.
As the good days were few and far between, Joe discussed one of his bad days with David. Joe recalled in the middle of a tag game, David stopped and sat down on the floor. As Joe sighed, he said, “Something told me it would happen, that he was gonna sit in that floor one time and he ain’t gonna get up and it’s gonna happen to me and I’m gonna have to deal with it, and it happened.” Joe explained that when he went to move him to the side, David screamed, “You can’t touch me!” Joe was flabbergasted, he could not believe that this was actually happening. He explained, “You would think I’d grabbed him by the arm with some force and all I did was take him by the elbow and try to help him up.” Joe said, he “made me feel like I’m a bad person.” In Joe’s eyes, he was only trying to move him out of the way so he did not get hurt but instead it escalated into an unpleasant scene. When I asked him how he felt, he stated, “I’m like damn that’s hard, it was like dang I didn’t even do anything, my goodness.” At that moment, Joe looked as if he had been convicted of a crime that he did not commit. With his eyebrows crunched together, he clenched his shirt and said, “I hope I never have to experience that again. I can’t imagine what the other students were thinking. I was shocked. He needs more help than I can give him.”

During the last interview with Joe, I asked him about his overall thoughts and feelings about teaching students with EBD. As he shook his head, he said, “I had no idea what to expect. To be honest, having kids like Chris and Kim and Josh and David I mean it’s been hard, it’s been trying, it’s been frustrating, it’s been fun too.”

Resembling Lisa, Andrew, and Joe’s feelings, Michelle expressed her feelings in her journal as she wrote, “Before entering the student teaching world, I have fears and doubts about working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders. I fear that I will crack under the pressure and will be unable to control myself against their actions.” Michelle’s fears came true when she had her first altercation with a student with EBD, Howard. Michelle described the argument that occurred between them. Howard was cursing in the hallway before the bell rang and Michelle said she asked “to speak to him in the hall. He refused. Over and over he told [her] that [she] could come to him.” She said, “Excuse me.” Apparently Howard then told her to come to him. In a furious voice, Michelle told him, “You can go to the office.” Howard refused and told her that he was “not going to the office, yo, [he’s] not going nowhere.” While Michelle was explaining what occurred between them, I watched her face turn red as she started to get worked up again. I asked her what she was feeling while this was going on. In a loud voice, she said, “He
hit a nerve that didn’t want to be touched today. I felt like cursing at him and pulling him out of that desk.” Michelle mentioned, “I never thought I would feel that way about a student.” This bothered Michelle because she explained that this “put a sense of rage inside” of her that she did not like to reveal. Michelle had confrontations with her other two student with EBD, Ashley and Chris, but there was no comparison to the degree of frustration and angry she felt with Howard on that one occasion.

During the eight weeks at the high school, Michelle had other frustrations that she had to contend with—her cooperating teacher. The frustrations quickly changed from Howard, Ashley, and Chris to her cooperating teacher. Michelle expressed, “I feel relieved when I see those kids because of the other crap that I’m dealing with, with my [cooperating teacher].” As her experienced ended at the high school, I asked Michelle about her overall thoughts and feelings about working with Howard, Ashley, and Chris. She said, “I really enjoyed it. I knew they had some behavioral problems and stuff but, it’s more of a challenge and if you don’t, as a teacher, face any challenges then you’re doing something wrong.” Michelle continued to say, “I enjoyed every minute that I worked with [them] from the beginning to the end, now that I look back because starting off on bad notes and seeing how they get better makes me feel good as a future teacher.” Regardless of the frustrations that Michelle experienced with students with EBD and her cooperating teacher, she felt like she “accomplished something in their lives.” Michelle was able to care about those students and give them the “extra push and attention” that they needed in their lives and she felt as though she did that successfully.

During Michelle’s experience at Santrock Elementary School, she expressed similar thoughts and feelings about teaching students with EBD at the elementary as she did at the high school level. Michelle worked with two students with EBD, Benjamin and Casey. Michelle experienced many frustrations with these two. She simply stated, “[Benjamin] and Casey both they both frustrated the hell out of me because like I said for me its harder to understand that age acting disrespectful and stuff.” Michelle found it easier to relate to the high school students with EBD than she did with the elementary students with EBD. She explained, “I understand the high school because of that age level all the peer pressure and I understood the different things that were going on in their lives and hormones.” However, based on Michelle’s childhood experience, she found it difficult to understand “younger kids cause they’re so formed by what adults think.” She remembered, “When I was a kid my parents liked George Bush or whatever,
so I liked George Bush, didn’t know [anything] about the man, and that’s just how kids are.”
During Michelle’s experience at the elementary school, I recall observing her teaching Benjamin how to throw a frisbee. While Benjamin was supposed to be throwing a frisbee at a target on the wall, he changed his target to a few students in the class. Michelle noticed what Benjamin was doing and went over and talked to him. She placed him in time out until the class was over. While the students were walking out of the gymnasium, Michelle turned to me and said, “It’s frustrating. I almost cried. I was so frustrated, he doesn’t listen or follow directions.”

A few days later, Benjamin gave Michelle an apology letter that he had written. Michelle’s frustrations slowly disappeared after reading the letter. Michelle described how she was “pleased” with Benjamin’s behavior and she “thought he was doing much better” since the apology letter. During Michelle’s last two weeks, Benjamin was transferred to another school. Michelle expressed, “That class is not the same, damn, I don’t even like talking about it. I was upset. I mean I was like so close to crying a little bit.” Michelle was upset when Benjamin left because she “didn’t get to say anything to [him] good bye, be good, whatever.”

At the end of Michelle’s student teaching experience, I asked her discuss her overall thoughts and feelings about teaching students with EBD. She stated, “At the beginning with all of them, they just like plucked my last damn nerve.” Michelle continued to describe her experience:

I mean at the secondary and with Howard here was a point [as she grunts] if there was not a line there, the boy would’ve been up against the window, he pissed me off so bad. Ashley, she would frustrate me cause she’d make these stupid ass remarks. Same with Chris, he’d make just stupid ass remarks and I couldn’t say what I really wanted to say back.

After talking about her feelings of frustrations at the high school, she mentioned her elementary experience. She said, “It was very frustrating with Casey and Benjamin at the beginning and at [one] point, I didn’t like them, at the beginning [they] pissed me off.” Michelle summed up her overall feelings by saying, “It was a rollercoaster- frustrating days, at the beginning most of the time [and] things would really eat me up, but at the end…it got better, the experience got better.”

**Trying Out Different Strategies to Work With Students With EBD**

Each preservice teacher experienced a spectrum of emotions while teaching students with EBD. In order for them to experience such emotions, they had to interact with students with
EBD. During numerous observations throughout the sixteen-week student teaching experience, I observed the participants interacting with students with EBD at each level. Below is a brief description of their interactions with students with EBD.

**High School Level**

Joe and Michelle worked with students with EBD at the Seatack High School. In the beginning, Joe struggled with keeping Kim active in PE class and Chris awake in health class. In PE class, Kim rarely acknowledged Joe unless he spoke directly to her the first few weeks. Throughout the eight weeks that Joe was teaching Kim, their communication varied depending on the day or week. In talking with Joe about this, he explained, “From the beginning, she didn’t want to say anything to me.” However, Joe described that she eventually talked to him and would “joke around with [him] sometimes.” In observing Kim, she only interacted with three other students in the class and one student in particular, her friend Amanda. If Kim played with anyone besides those three students then she would cause a confrontation. Joe confirmed my observations by saying, “Not much conflict or confrontation when I let [Amanda and her] do things.” Joe explained how he tried to get her in the mix with other students, [but] it was a constant struggle with her.”

Unlike Kim, Chris and Joe’s interactions were much different. After a confrontation with Chris, Joe and Chris talked almost every day. Joe explained, “On the personal side, I think I made a connection with him. It was a respect thing.” Joe felt as though he could not reach Chris on “the book side” but more on “the personal side.” Joe was content with this because as he stated, “I got to him as a person where we’re not banging heads together.” Joe elaborated, “I don’t like causing confrontations. I really [wanted] them to know I’m trying to help them.” From Joe’s overall experience with Kim and Chris, I asked him to explain to in his own words how he thought he interacted with them. He said, “Try to go along with [them] and work with [them], not work against [them].”

Michelle’s experience, however, was a little different than Joe’s. Michelle worked with Howard and Ashley in health and Chris in PE. In the beginning, Michelle had difficulty talking with all three. They gave Michelle a hard time in the beginning. Howard got into a confrontation with Michelle when she wanted to speak to him about “cursing in the hallway.” After this confrontation, Michelle spoke to Howard whenever she needed to but did not go out of her way to speak to him. In class, Howard rarely spoke to anyone except Ashley.
Ashley on the other hand spoke to everyone in the class. From my observations, Ashley was a constant disruption. When I spoke to Michelle about Ashley’s behavior, she said, “Most of the time I block her out.” Michelle continued to explain, “I’m just used to hearing [her] now and so I ignore [her] but until she gets to the point where it will finally hit me in a class period and then I’ll say something to her.” Michelle admitted, “Before it did irritate me cause I wasn’t used to it.” In watching Ashley and Michelle interact, Ashley seemed to do whatever she wanted in the beginning. After about four weeks, Ashley starts listening to Michelle and speaking to her on a consistent basis.

Different from Howard and Ashley, Chris had Michelle for PE. Chris was quiet but sneaky. He constantly defied Michelle for the first four weeks. Michelle would tell him what to do and he would do the opposite. During the first couple of weeks, Michelle stated, “I can’t stand that boy.” It was a constant battle between the two of them until something happened. During week four, I noticed Michelle talking to Chris and joking with him. I saw him go to hand her a frisbee then pull it away like he was trying to keep it away from her. I watched her laugh and smile while she reached for the frisbee several times until Chris finally gave it to her.

During our second interview, I asked Michelle about this change I noticed and she said, “In the beginning, I tried to be establish control in my class and not give in.” She expressed that she “wasn’t very open” with Howard, Ashley, and Chris because she did not want them to think she was “crossing that line to be more of their friend than their teacher.” She continued to explain, “Once I started opening up to them, I realized it was okay to get to know them and them know some stuff about me too.”

Middle School Level

Unlike Joe and Michelle, Lisa and Andrew worked with students with EBD at the middle school level. Lisa taught several students with EBD in one class whereas Andrew only taught one student. While observing Lisa at the middle school, she was very timid in the beginning. I watched her go from not speaking, to speaking quietly, and to yelling to get her students with EBD to listen and follow directions. At first she was ignored them or settling for the teacher’s aides to take care of these students. I observed Lisa trying to get James’s attention and he just turned and walked away from her. She stood there and watched him walk away and said, “I guess he can’t hear me or he’s just ignoring me.” Lisa quickly realized that this wasn’t working and started to make a change. Lisa stopped ignoring these students and started working with
them by talking to them and holding them accountable for their behavior. The next time I observed Lisa trying to talk to James, James came over to her and listened instead of walking away from her and ignoring her.

During my second interview with Lisa, I asked her to explain how she interacted with the students with EBD. Lisa sat back and said, “I shied away from them because I was scared.” Lisa felt like the students with EBD would treat her like she was “just a student teacher” and they would not “have to pay attention to her.” She also explained, “I shied away from them plus I didn’t know them either, so I was like I don’t know what they’re gonna do.”

Unlike Lisa, Andrew worked with one student with EBD at Winslow Middle School. However, Lisa and Andrew both started out trying to ignore their students with EBD. Andrew explained, “I’ve tried to ignore Josh.” While ignoring Josh, Andrew quickly realized that Josh would go “somewhere else to get that attention.” Josh did not interact with other students unless it was a fight or confrontation but he still managed to get other students’ attention even though it was negative attention. When Andrew would ask the students to find a partner, Josh was “always the one without a partner.” Andrew explained, “He never had a partner . . . I don’t know whether or not people would’ve been so positive to want to be his partner.” This was a daily “challenge” for Andrew and Josh.

From the limited observations of Andrew and Josh, I watched Andrew go from ignoring him in the beginning to seeking him out in the end. When I first observed Andrew, Josh wanted to hand out the folders to the students. Andrew told Josh that he needed to hand the folders out because he was “learning everyone’s name.” Josh ignored Andrew and insisted on handing the folders out. This situation ended when Andrew’s cooperating teacher removed Josh from the room until the folders were handed out. Josh returned to the room seeking any sort of attention by raising his hand frantically to blurring out in class. At the end of class, Andrew said, “I noticed that throughout the class, he was just trying to get some attention.”

As weeks passed, Josh still sought any type of attention but Andrew changed his approach. He no longer ignored Josh but tried to reason with him in order to get him to do what Andrew wanted him to do. Sometimes the reasoning worked and sometimes it did not. At the end of Andrew’s experience, we discussed his interactions with Josh. Andrew expressed, “In the beginning I guess I shied away from [him] but after a few weeks, I tried to get to know him and
maybe let [my] guard down a little bit with [him].” This explained Andrews’s reaction of ignoring him to seeking him out.

Elementary School Level

Due to the limited amount of time at the elementary school level, it was difficult for Joe, Andrew, Lisa, and Michelle to interact with students with EBD. They only saw their students twice a week for thirty minutes. I also found it difficult to observe them interacting with their students with EBD because of field trips, time constraints, and absences. However, I will discuss the interactions that I did observe.

At Villa Elementary School, Joe worked with David and Josh. From my observations of Joe working with David and Josh, I noticed that he spent most of his time talking and working with these two students. When David was in the class, Joe was aware of David’s every move. If Joe wasn’t calling David’s name to get him back on task, he was standing close to him making sure he was following directions and not hurting anyone. If Joe turned away from David to help another student, David would do something like hang on the pull up bar with a golf club. When I spoke to Joe about devoting most of his time and attention towards David, he expressed, “I’m constantly aware of him, like I say with the bats and clubs. It’s tough to do a lesson like that [because] I’m always right there with David.”

Unlike David, Josh could be left alone during class to a certain extent. Joe described Josh as being “really detached” and “standoffish from everyone.” Joe’s interaction with Josh was different from David’s because Josh often sought Joe’s attention. Josh mostly worked alone in class and when he was partnered with another student, Josh kept to himself. Joe confirmed my observation of Josh’s interactions with the other students in the class when he said, “I didn’t really see Josh interacting a lot with other students.” Despite the limited amount of interaction with the other students, Josh did however, speak to Joe when he was seeking his attention. When I discussed Josh’s need for Joe’s attention, Joe explained, “He always wanted me to watch him, anytime he was doing something, he wanted me to watch him.” At the end, Joe admitted that he “spent more time with David and Josh because they needed it.”

Down the road at Big Rock Elementary, Andrew worked with Shawn. When Andrew started working with Shawn at the beginning, I watched him ignore Shawn during an entire class period. Andrew was giving directions and the whole time Andrew was talking, Shawn was talking as well. I noticed Andrew raise his voice and try to talk over Shawn without stopping
Shawn from talking. It was like Andrew was immune to Shawn’s voice. When I asked Andrew if he was selectively ignoring Shawn, he said, “Yes, he was talking right over top of me.” The more Andrew ignored Shawn, the more attention Shawn sought from Andrew.

Eventually, Andrew stopped ignoring Shawn and started trying different ways to stop him from being a disruption. Andrew expressed, “Shawn was looking to get my attention so therefore he was a little more persistent at interrupting or blurting out so I had to come up with something else.” With one week left, Andrew came up with a solution for Shawn. He gave Shawn three tickets and every time he spoke, he gave Andrew a ticket. Once Andrew had all three of the tickets, Shawn was no longer allowed to ask a question or talk. I observed this solution and it worked well. Andrew also started spacing himself away from Shawn. Andrew would walk by Shawn, speak to him, than walk away quickly. Andrew started to lessen his interactions with Shawn. Shawn’s interactions with Andrew were now limited and his interactions with other students were limited as well. Shawn only had one student, Cody, who would be his partner and talk to him on a regular basis. By the end of Andrew’s experience, he only spoke to Shawn a couple of times throughout the class period and Shawn stayed on task and spoke to Cody. When I talked to Andrew about his interactions with Shawn, he expressed, “I shied away from [him] at the beginning because I was kinda like sensory overload.” Andrew discussed how he felt like he was “thrown in” at the elementary school so that did not allow him time to “go and delve into each kids situation” until later.

Miles away at Hobbes Elementary School, Lisa worked with Justin and on occasion, Dorian. Lisa only worked with Dorian three times during her student teaching experience at the elementary school. Justin however, was in Lisa’s class every day. When Lisa discussed Justin always being in class, she said, “Man, he’s never absent, it’s crazy that I know that.” When Justin came to class, we came in about five minutes late each day because he had to stay back to work with his teacher. Each time I observed Justin, he would come charging into the room and start running around until Lisa stopped him to give him directions on what the other students were doing. During each observation, I watched Justin try to get Lisa’s attention. This did not take very long because the majority of Lisa’s time was devoted to Justin.

I recalled one day when Lisa had her students on a mat and they were working on balancing on their heads by making a tripod. The entire time Lisa was on the mat, Justin was right in front of her trying to get her attention. When Lisa would sit him to the side of her, he
would wander around the mat and hit other students in the class. Lisa constantly had to tend to Justin. Towards the end of the class, Lisa asked her students to put their shoes on. At this point, Justin turned to Lisa and told her “no, you put em on.” Lisa ignored him and he put his shoes on.

During the last interview, I asked Lisa about her interactions with Justin. Lisa explained, “I shied away from [him] the first week and than it was like okay well now I know.” Throughout the eight weeks, Lisa selectively ignored Justin until she had to address his behavior. When I asked Lisa about Justin seeking her attention, she expressed, “He wants me to be calling his name all the time, he wants me [to] look at him all the time and if not, than he’ll try to get it, do something crazy.” Lisa recognized Justin’s attempts on getting her attention. Lisa explained: “It’s hard to focus on the rest of the class when I pay attention to Justin all the time.” Through my observations, Lisa interacted more with Justin than any other student in the class. Justin’s interactions with the other students however, were limited. Most of the students did not talk or play with Justin. Lisa explained, “They didn’t want Justin messing with them so they just stayed away from him.”

At Santrock Elementary, Michelle worked with Benjamin and Casey. When Michelle first started working with them she stated, “I did not like [them] at all. Casey, she had this bad attitude and Benjamin, he was off the wall, just always off task.” This was obvious during my observations because the only time Michelle would interact with Benjamin was when she yelled at him and put him in time out. Michelle did not say anything to Casey, however, and avoided her even when she would take herself out of the activity. At the beginning of each class, Michelle would talk to the students and they would all sit in a semi-circle around her. Benjamin and Casey both sat the furthest away from Michelle.

After five weeks passed, I noticed a change in the way Michelle was interacting with Benjamin and Casey. Michelle was no longer yelling at Benjamin and she was actually talking to Casey. When I asked Michelle about this change, she simply said, “It just clicked, like at the high school, I don’t know, it just happened.” Michelle described how things changed with Benjamin when she said, “It was something about him, I think it was just putting so much effort into trying to help [him] and giving [him] a little extra feedback that he needed.” Michelle explained how she changed with Casey when she said, “I can see when she plays the games, the smiles and stuff on her face caused me to get to where I liked her more.” The more time
Michelle spent with Benjamin and Casey the more she interacted with them. As Michelle simply stated, “I had fun with them, and played with them, and opened up in a kiddish type sense.”

In this chapter, I discussed the themes that became apparent from Michelle, Joe, Andrew, and Lisa’s student teaching experience. One theme focused on concerns about teaching students with EBD. Within those concerns, three specific concerns were focused on safety, feelings of being unqualified, and finding balance: preservice teachers’ struggles with dividing attention equally among all students. The following themes focused on their thoughts and feelings on inclusion, the emotions they experienced as well as trying out different strategies to work with students with EBD during their interactions with students with EBD.

In the following chapter, I will answer the research questions that formed this study. In addition, I will discuss the implications and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 6
Discoveries and Suggestions

In the previous chapter, the themes that emerged from the data were elaborated upon and
examined. Below is a discussion and summary of the findings organized by the individual
research questions. Implications and conclusion to this study follow.

Thoughts, Feelings, and Concerns

The first question that guided this study was as follows: What thoughts, feelings, and
concerns do preservice physical education teachers have regarding teaching students with
emotional/behavioral disorders in a general education setting and how do their thoughts,
feelings, and concerns change over time?

The four participants, Lisa, Andrew, Joe, and Michelle went through a gamut of emotions
before, during, and after their student teaching experiences. Before they started, all the
participants were nervous but excited. This is usually a normal reaction for most student
teachers. However, their experiences changed drastically with emotions that were similar to
riding an emotional rollercoaster. Throughout the secondary experience, each participant
expressed similar feelings of frustration as well as happiness. Lisa and Andrew’s emotions
changed as quickly as “minute by minute,” or daily, depending on their situations. As Lisa,
Andrew, and Joe experienced different emotions from frustration to happiness, Michelle
encountered similar frustrations in the beginning but her frustrations turned toward her
cooperating teacher by the end of her secondary placement rather than experiencing frustrations
from the students with EBD. Regardless of the difficulties she had with her students with EBD,
she still responded, “I’ve enjoyed it so much, it’s just unreal.” Although all of the participants
encountered varying frustrations, they also experienced moments of joy and excitement while
working with students with EBD.

From the secondary placement to the elementary placement, Lisa, Andrew, Joe, and
Michelle experienced another spectrum of emotions. Lisa and Andrew were more relaxed rather
than nervous or excited to teach students with EBD at the elementary level. Andrew’s feelings
were similar to Lisa’s when he said he was “looking forward to doing different things, seeing
different things.” Joe and Michelle however, had a different response to how they were feeling
about teaching students with EBD at the elementary level. Michelle stated that she was “excited”
and she felt “well prepared for [the] elementary [placement] verses [the] secondary [placement].” All of the participants felt more prepared to teach students at the elementary level but Andrew and Joe expressed that they were unsure about their abilities to teach students with EBD at the elementary level. Michelle and Lisa however, felt more confident because of their prior experience with students with EBD at the secondary level and stated that they wanted to work with students with EBD. Lisa explained, “It’s challenging [to work with students with EBD], but I liked the challenge. If I didn’t have those kids at all, it would’ve been too easy. I want to work with them.” Similar to Folsom-Meek, Nearing, Groteluschen, and Krampf (1999) who conducted a study that revealed female preservice personnel had more favorable attitudes than male personnel did, Michelle and Lisa demonstrated eagerness toward wanting to work with students with EBD.

As the participants moved through their student teaching experience at the elementary level, their emotions drastically changed again with the same up and down feelings of frustration and happiness that they experienced at the secondary level. However, all of the participants encountered more frustrating days than satisfying days at the elementary level. Each participant expressed that “twice a week for thirty minutes” was not enough time to work with students with EBD. This also added to the frustrations of working with students with EBD. The participants felt they formed a relationship with the students with EBD at the secondary level but they did not have enough time to form any kind of relationship with the students with EBD at the elementary level. At the secondary level, the participants had contact with the students with EBD everyday for fifty minutes unlike twice a week for thirty minutes at the elementary level. Teaching and interacting with students with EBD everyday on a regular basis at the secondary level provided more opportunities for the participants to communicate and form a relationship with students with EBD than at the elementary level. I noticed this frustration during several observations throughout their elementary placement. The total number of times that each participant could possibly work with a student with EBD was no more than sixteen times.

The limited amount of contact between the participants and the students with EBD created higher levels of frustration. From Joe’s experience, he stated, “It’s frustrating; it’s hard for me to make any kind of connections with [students with EBD].” Having been a physical education teacher in the public school system, I recognize that it is important to build and foster relationships with students of all abilities. These drastic emotional changes are identifiers of the
lack of experience in preservice physical education teachers. Everyone goes through different emotions while working with children, but the level of frustrations that I observed from the participants could possibly have been lessened if they had prior experience with working with students with EBD. If the student teachers were given the opportunity to work directly with students with EBD before being immersed in the student teaching experience, they could explore different strategies to work successfully with these students.

As the participants experienced a gamut of emotions, they also had several concerns about teaching students with EBD. From the concerns that they discussed—safety, feelings of being unqualified, and finding balance—preservice teachers’ struggles with dividing attention equally among all students became the most worrisome throughout their experience. The concern of safety was disclosed before the participants started their student teaching experience. All of the participants expressed that safety was a concern because students with EBD were “unpredictable” and they did not know what to expect prior to teaching students with EBD. In addition, the participants mentioned they did not want the students with EBD to “harm” the other students. Andrew stated, “I wouldn’t want them to hurt themselves, any other students, any other teachers.”

The safety concern changed for Joe and Michelle during the secondary experience but quickly became a concern again at the elementary level. Andrew and Lisa continued to state that safety was a concern for them when it comes to teaching students with EBD. Based on the characteristics of students with EBD that the participants described, externalizing disorders best describes the participants’ thoughts. Externalizing disorders refer to the individual being “extroversive or interpersonal in their manifestations; in the past, they have been called under-controlled and acting out” (Coleman, 1996, p. 135). Individuals who engage in these types of behaviors tend to be directed at others than themselves (Hardman et al., 1999). Some of the students exhibited aggressive and impulsive behaviors that the participants associate the “unpredictable” behaviors from the students that they worked with during their experience. This would support their concern about safety.

In addition to the characteristics of students with EBD, the participants only had one adapted physical education (APE) class to prepare them to teach students with special needs. It is understandable that safety was a concern because of the lack of knowledge and experience about teaching students with EBD. One APE class cannot adequately prepare preservice physical
education teachers to teach students with EBD. Folsom-Meek, Nearing, Groteluschen, and Krampf (1995b) reported that preservice personnel who rated high on their overall educational preparation, perceived themselves as competent, acquired hands-on experience, and had a hands-on experience course requirement had favorable attitudes toward students with disabilities. The participants from this study only had exposure to one APE class and had no hands-on experiences to help better prepare them to work with students with EBD. All of the participants expressed that there should be a practicum experience in their teacher preparation program to allow them to work with students with EBD prior to entering their student teaching experience. They voiced that it’s “not fair” to expect physical education teachers to be able to teach students with EBD when they’ve only been given “one APE class” in their undergraduate program.

From the lack of experience, feelings of being unqualified to teach students with EBD occurred during the preservice experience. In the beginning, the participants expressed that one APE class was not enough to prepare them to teach students with EBD. Michelle stated, “One class for one semester will never prepare me enough to deal with what the real world’s about.” After the first eight weeks at the secondary placement, Andrew and Joe still felt like they were not qualified to teach students with EBD whereas Michelle and Lisa felt that their experience made them feel more qualified. Interestingly enough, Andrew and Joe are both older than Michelle and Lisa and similar to the findings of Rizzo (1985), the younger teachers had more favorable attitudes than their older counterparts.

Throughout the student teaching experience, Andrew was consistent in stating that he did not feel qualified to teach students with EBD. Joe was more qualified in caring about students with EBD because he took the time to try and get to know them as a person and help them in his classroom. In addition to caring, Joe felt like he needed to learn more about teaching students with EBD. Lisa felt that her experience made her more qualified to teach students with EBD. Michelle on the other hand, went back and forth with her feelings about being qualified to teach students with EBD before each experience. At the end of her student teaching experience, she felt as though she was qualified to teach students with EBD based on how she handled certain situations and getting to know the students. Rizzo and Kowalski (1996) reported that students who perceived competence in teaching/working with individuals with disabilities had more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities. My findings correspond to Rizzo and Kowalski’s (1996) findings because Michelle and Lisa both want to teach students with
EBD as well as feeling more qualified to teach students with EBD than Andrew and Joe. Andrew and Joe do not believe they are qualified enough to teach students with EBD, and they both have mixed emotions about teaching students with EBD in a regular physical education setting.

It was interesting to watch how Michelle and Lisa’s thoughts and feelings changed from feeling unprepared to teach students with EBD to feelings of being more qualified after working with students with EBD than Andrew and Joe. Similar to a study done by Hodge and Jansma (2000) who found that female physical education majors’ with experience held more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities than their male peers, I found the two females to be more confident about their abilities. Not only did Michelle and Lisa feel competent in their teaching abilities after they completed their experience, they also wanted to continue working with students with EBD in the future. Whereas, Andrew and Joe were unsure of their qualifications and continued to question their abilities regardless of their experience with teaching students with EBD. As Andrew explained, “I was trained to be a physical education teacher, not an adapted PE specialist.”

From the safety concern to the feelings of being unqualified to teach students with EBD, the participants expressed another concern of finding balance as they described the struggles that they encountered while trying to divide their attention equally among all the students. This concern focused on the amount of attention that students with EBD required from the preservice teachers throughout their student teaching experience. Before the student teaching experience, Andrew and Joe had concerns about “spending too much time” with students with EBD and “taking away from the other so-called ‘normal’ students.” Unlike Andrew and Joe, Michelle and Lisa did not express this particular concern at the beginning.

After teaching eight weeks at the secondary level, Lisa’s concern of finding balance changed because she was spending more time with students with EBD and she recognized it. I observed Lisa spending most of her time trying to keep up with students with EBD. It was difficult for her because she had several in one class period. Based on my observations and past experience, it is easier to teach a class with just one student with EBD than it is six. By the end of Lisa’s experience, she realized that whether she had one student with EBD or six, she was still finding it difficult to spend time with all of her students when she had a student with EBD in her class. Joe, Andrew, and Michelle had from one to no more than three students with EBD during their student teaching experience. Andrew and Joe continued to express how it was difficult to
work with the other students in the class when a student with EBD was present. Andrew realized very quickly that his student, Josh, required more attention than Andrew was willing to give at the secondary level. From my observations of Andrew and Josh, Andrew spent most of his time watching and focusing on what Josh was doing and had limited contact with the rest of the students, especially on an individual basis. Similar to Andrew, Joe was unaware that he was spending most of his time with Kim and Chris until he finished his secondary experience. In his second interview, Joe realized he spent most of his time with those students, confirming my observations. Like Andrew would say, “I couldn’t see the forest through the trees” and neither could Joe.

Joe and Michelle both struggled with noticing the amount of time that they spent with students with EBD. When I spoke to Michelle in an informal interview after watching her at the secondary level, she could not believe that most of her time was spent speaking to Ashley. I recall one class period where Michelle spoke to her three students with EBD over forty six times in a fifty-minute class period. She would either call their name to get their attention or speak to them directly, yet she later told me she was unaware she spoke to them that many times. In my own teaching experience, I found it difficult to conceive that a teacher was not aware of how much time she spent speaking to students and calling their names. It caused me to question if this was a daily routine for her when she taught these three students. At Michelle’s second interview, she explained that students with EBD “add more to the class” and they do not necessarily require more attention. I believe that Michelle was struggling with the situation with her cooperating teacher and she turned a “blind eye” to the fact that her three students needed more attention as well as she did. At the end of Michelle’s secondary experience, she finally realized that students with EBD do need more attention but she did not realize it at the time because she was also seeking attention from those students because of the situation with her cooperating teacher.

From all the thoughts, feelings, and concerns that changed over time, inclusion was by far the most intriguing to follow. Throughout the entire experience, Michelle and Lisa expressed that students with EBD “should be included, regardless.” Andrew and Joe however, struggled with the thought of inclusion being best for all students with EBD. This study confirms that the controversy on inclusion still exists.

After listening to the participants’ explanations why students with EBD should or should not be included, I have drawn my own conclusions about inclusion of students with EBD. If
teacher preparation programs are expecting preservice teachers to teach students with EBD, then these programs should provide preservice teachers with the opportunity and experience to teach these students in an actual school setting. Offering only one APE course without any hands-on experience is a disservice to the preservice teachers and our teacher preparation programs. I would not want a student studying to be a surgeon to never experience a surgical procedure before performing any type of surgery on me. We are sending preservice teachers into the public schools to work with children without prior exposure and experience. Inclusion can be wonderful if it is done properly. Teacher preparation programs are not fostering appropriate learning experiences for preservice teachers to work with students with EBD. There is no one solution or strategy to help preservice teachers teach students with EBD, but the least that teacher preparation programs can do is to empower preservice teachers with as much knowledge and experience as possible to help them teach all students.

**Interactions Through Experiences**

The second question that guided this study – How do preservice physical education teachers interact with students with emotional/behavioral disorders in the classroom/gymnasium and how do their experiences change over time? – will now be discussed.

Throughout the entire sixteen-week student teaching experience, the participants’ interactions with students with EBD evolved from “ignoring students” to spending most of their time with them. All the participants tried the same strategy of ignoring the students with EBD in the beginning of each placement and then learned to interact with the students more towards the end of each placement. After they all figured out that ignoring the students with EBD was not the best strategy to use, they eventually let their guard down and started communicating with their students. This was apparent through my observations at the beginning and end of each placement as well as the participants expressing their changes as they interacted with their students.

Bem (1970) states that “many beliefs are the product of direct experience” which triggers varying attitudes of likes and dislikes (p. 5). From observing and listening to Michelle at the beginning of her experiences, she “did not like” her students with EBD. This fostered her reaction to ignore those students at the beginning. However, through her experience, she stated that “something clicked” and she “liked them.” Her direct experience had an effect on her thoughts and feelings about working with students with EBD and how she interacted with them. When Michelle did not “like” her students, she basically ignored them and had little interaction...
with them. The interaction that she did have with them was mostly negative. However, the more Michelle worked with her students, the more her thoughts and feelings changed as well as her interactions. Michelle was more positive with her students and spent more time interacting and communicating with students with EBD.

Similar to Michelle, Andrew, and Lisa shied away from their students with EBD. Andrew shied away because he did not know what to expect when working with students with EBD. Eventually, Andrew made a change from ignoring Shawn to seeking him out students with EBD. When I observed Andrew, it was obvious that his strategy of ignoring was not working. His mixed emotions about feeling qualified to teach students with EBD caused him to react in this manner. However, if he would have had prior experience, his feelings may have been different. From observing the satisfaction of making a breakthrough with both his students with EBD, it is reasonable to assume that his most recent experience will help in future situations.

Lisa’s feelings of being qualified are much stronger than Andrew’s feelings. Lisa shied away from the students with EBD at the middle school because she did not know what to expect either. However, when she got to the elementary level, she only shied away for a shorter time frame whereas Andrew shied away for a longer period of time at each placement. Lisa’s confidence in her teaching has provided her with the eagerness to work with students with EBD in a regular physical education setting. Her strong belief regarding inclusion makes her work hard to find different ways to make physical education successful for all her students, including students with EBD because when they are not successful, she does not feel as though she is successful. This influenced her interactions with students with EBD throughout her experience. After she stopped shying away, she literally took the bull by the horns and started to get to know these students and work with them instead of away from them. I believe that Lisa would have avoided shying away in the beginning if she had been exposed to some prior experience since she was unable to comprehend what it would be like to teach students with EBD. Without that experience, she was shying away because she did not know what to expect in the beginning, similar to a person not liking a certain kind of food before she even tries it because she does not know whether or not she is going to like it. This is how I imagine Lisa feeling when she first started teaching students with EBD, which she validated during our interviews.

Joe’s experience with interacting with students with EBD had some similarities but also some differences when compared to Michelle, Andrew, and Lisa’s. Joe’s strategy of ignoring
students with EBD was brief. In getting to know Joe, it has become evident that he has difficulties ignoring anything. Joe believes in showing respect, and for him, causing outbursts in a class is not respectful. Joe tried to ignore his students with EBD but quickly realized that this was not the strategy for him. Joe attempted to make some kind of connection with his students in order to work with them. He allowed Kim to work with a friend of hers because he did not want to cause a confrontation with her.

Based on what I’ve learned about Joe, he would not do the same for a student who did not have a disability. Joe expressed to me several times about how he would respond to students without disabilities. Joe said, “If somebody else did it, another student, I’d nip it right there quick.” Joe’s empathy for students with EBD comes from his caring personality, but this same empathy caused him to spend more of his time with those students instead of “spreading himself out” among the other students. Most of Joe’s interactions with his students with EBD at the high school were trying to get them involved in the class. Joe tried numerous times to get Kim involved with working with the other students in the class but he was often unsuccessful. Joe did however build a relationship with Kim and Chris at the high school where he felt comfortable talking to them and trying to get to know them as a person, or as Joe would say, “reach them.”

Joe’s relationship building abilities crumbled as he entered his elementary placement. He had limited time to interact with the students with EBD, and most of that time was spent keeping David on task and giving attention to Josh by watching him closely. During my observations, Joe’s interactions were more on a personal level with his students at the high school whereas at the elementary school, it was more management control so no one got hurt. Joe’s beliefs about being able to teach rely heavily on the ethic of caring first. He exhibited that belief by the way he communicated with his students. Building relationships and making connections with students with EBD are important strategies for teachers to engage in when teaching students. This provides teachers with a better understanding about students with EBD as well as aiding them in finding different ways to teach them. Sometimes, the best strategy is to ask the students themselves because they provide teachers with information to help teach them.

It becomes clear through the findings in this study that there are links between beliefs and experience. So, if teacher preparation programs provide preservice teachers with hands-on experiences to work with students with EBD, we can help in the development of positive attitudes and perceptions. Folsom-Meek et al. (1999) found that preservice personnel who had
hands-on experience had more favorable attitudes than those did with no experience. Because the participants in this study did not have any hands-on experience prior to student teaching, it is understandable why they decided to ignore students with EBD in the beginning and as they gained more experience, their interactions increased and became positive.

**Implications**

By studying preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions toward teaching students with EBD in a general education setting, implications have emerged for teacher preparation programs. According to the findings of this study, it would be useful for preparation programs to provide preservice physical education teachers ample opportunity to work with students with EBD in a general education setting. This could be done by sending students in an adapted physical education course out to the schools to work with these types of students in a real health and physical education setting before their full time student teaching experiences. This exposure would allow students to encounter learning experiences first hand and enable them to bring their experiences and questions back to the adapted physical education course to share with the class to allow for further discussion and opportunities to practice potential strategies to work with students with EBD.

If going out to the schools in not an option, then preparation programs should bring the schools to the classes through videos or CD’s of teachers working in similar contexts. Teachers who are currently working with students with EBD can be videotaped and teacher preparation programs can use these videos for discussion and tools to generate strategies. In addition, computer chat rooms could provide preservice teachers and veteran teachers opportunities to communicate and question what was viewed on the video and the strategies that were used.

Another suggestion is to infuse the adapted physical education course and the pedagogical courses to discuss management strategies for working with students with EBD. Folsom-Meek et al. (1999) recommend “infusion of adapted physical activity concepts into the curriculum” (p. 39). By infusing these courses, it will allow preservice physical education teachers to “learn how to provide safe, appropriate, and successful instructional environments for individuals of all abilities” (Folsom-Meek et al., 1999, p. 39). If the preparation programs work together, then students will be able to discuss behavioral and management problems before students encounter their student teaching experience. Teacher preparation programs should be helping students prepare to work with students with EBD before they are just about to graduate.
or experience their student teaching. The plan to infuse adapted physical education and pedagogical courses will help provide a consistent learning experience for preservice physical education teachers. “Not preparing physical educators to teach and work with individuals of all abilities is a serious error of omission in our professional preparation programs” (Folsom-Meek et al., 1999, p. 39).

In this study, all participants were unsure if they were qualified to teach students with EBD at some point in their student teaching experience because of lack of exposure and strategies for working with these students. It is important to recognize that students with EBD will be in regular physical education classes and preservice physical education teachers need to have some strategies for working with these students. It is impossible to have a solution for working with all students with EBD in a physical education setting. However, teacher preparation programs can provide preservice physical education teachers with a foundation that they can build on through their experiences instead of struggling with trying to figure out basic strategies to work with students with EBD.

Instead of separating the adapted physical education course and pedagogical courses, these courses should have a strong connection between them when discussing behavioral and management issues and strategies. By making this connection, preservice physical education teachers would have opportunities to work with students with EBD in different practicum teaching experiences before their student teaching experience. Behavioral and management issues and strategies with working with students with EBD would not only be discussed in an adapted physical education course or setting, it would be woven throughout the teacher preparation programs.

Conclusions

Several studies have been conducted on physical education teachers’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities but that very few have focused on preservice teachers’ attitudes toward teaching students with EBD. Because most of the studies have been focused on Rizzo’s (1993) PEATID-III survey and not perceptions of preservice physical education teachers, it was important to go beyond the survey and get more in-depth on preservice physical education teachers’ thoughts, feelings, and concerns toward teaching student with EBD. Based on the results of this study, I have only touched on a small part of a large and complex issue.
when it comes to understanding preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions toward teaching students with EBD.

This study has, however, allowed for a better understanding of what preservice physical education teachers think and feel before, during, and after teaching students with EBD. Each participant experienced a gamut of emotions from different levels of frustration to levels of excitement while teaching students with EBD. The concerns that preservice physical education teachers expressed throughout their student teaching experience are valid and should be addressed. The participants were concerned with safety issues before they started, Michelle and Joe’s concerns faded at the secondary level but became more apparent at the elementary level while Andrew and Lisa’s were continuous throughout. The participants’ feelings of being qualified to work with students with EBD were mixed for Andrew and Joe while Lisa and Michelle felt that their student teaching experiences have prepared them for future encounters. Another concern was focused on inclusion. Michelle and Lisa were consistent in believing that all children should be included in regular physical education classes where Andrew and Joe had mixed emotions on whether inclusion is best of all students with EBD.

Further Research Suggestions

The findings of this study present a rationale for further research into preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions toward teaching students with EBD in a general education setting. Many studies have been conducted quantitatively through the use of the PEATID-III survey but based on Hodge and Jansma (1999), “the use of qualitative research designs in APE attitudinal research should also be encouraged” (p. 60). This study focused on perceptions toward teaching students with EBD instead of a variety of disabilities. The thoughts, feelings, and concerns of four preservice physical education teachers were explored because students with EBD will be present in most regular physical education settings. Depending on the teacher preparation program, this study can assist a program in gaining a better understanding on what their particular program is lacking when it comes to preparing preservice physical education teachers to work with students with EBD beyond a written survey.

Further research could examine and compare two different universities where an infusion program is present at one university and not present at another university to see what the perceptions toward teaching students with EBD are and if there is a difference. In this study, Gamay University does not have an infusion program so this is only a stepping stone to uncover
other avenues of research on preservice physical education teachers’ perceptions toward teaching students with EBD. Like Andrew said, “These kids are gonna be in your classes, their gonna be labeled, their gonna be there, [so] we need to have more opportunities to work with [students with EBD] before now, it’s too late.”
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Vita

Suzanne M. Parker was born in San Diego, California on December 18, 1969. She graduated from Bayside High School in 1988. She received the Bachelor of Science degree in Health and Physical Education from Norfolk State University (Virginia) in 1993. In 1999, she received the Master of Science degree in Health and Physical Education from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Currently, she is completing requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Physical Education Pedagogy from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Dr. Parker has five years of teaching health, physical education, and adapted physical education at the middle school level. During that time, she coached field hockey, softball, and basketball. In addition to teaching and coaching, she also became a low and high ropes facilitator to work with students to promote teamwork and communication. While a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, she was a graduate teaching assistant and university supervisor. She has accepted a position at SUNY Cortland (New York) as Assistant Professor of Physical Education.