Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD) experience deficits in social, behavioral, and academic areas. Of great importance in the academic area is reading achievement. Students with E/BD who struggle with reading tend to have negative in-school and post-school outcomes. Due to the severity of potential outcomes, it is essential to effectively remediate the reading problems of students with E/BD. This study examined the perceptions of teachers and students who participated in an eight-week Corrective Reading intervention. Corrective Reading is an evidence-based, explicit reading program used with struggling readers for grades 3-12. Four teachers completed an interview and 18 students participated in focus groups. The Constant Comparative Method was used to analyze the interview and focus group responses to develop themes across respondents. The identified themes are described and discussed along with future directions and implications for practice.

Without effective assessment and intervention strategies, adolescents with academic skill deficits often experience common and pronounced problems in the areas of academics and behavior (Levy & Chard, 2001). Of particular importance is reading ability, given that reading is intertwined across all academic areas and life skills. For students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD) who struggle with reading, research suggests negative results in school and post-school including: dropout, incarceration, and unemployment (Wagner et al., 2005). Evidence-based programs implemented at high levels of fidelity are needed to decrease the likelihood of students with E/BD experiencing negative post-school outcomes. Corrective Reading (CR: Engelmann et al., 1999) is one intervention which has been shown to improve reading achievement.
with struggling readers with E/BD (Lingo, Slaton, & Jolivette, 2006; Strong, Wehby, Falk, & Lane, 2004) who are one to four years behind grade level in reading in grades 3-12.

*Corrective Reading* (Engelmann et al., 1999) is an explicit reading program grounded in the guiding principles of direct instruction: scripted lessons, small groups, choral responding, signaling, modeling, praise, corrective feedback, and effective pacing (Shapiro, 2004). *Corrective Reading* provides intense, systematic instruction in specific deficit areas to students who have not yet mastered basic reading skills. Specifically, CR is designed to address decoding and comprehension instruction although specific skills are targeted per program level (see: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning_reading/cr/ for a full description of each program and level). For instance, Decoding B1 (the second level) primarily involves phonics instruction but within each lesson students are given opportunities for reading fluency and comprehension practice.

Research has been conducted on the effectiveness of CR with different populations of students and in different settings such as middle school students with behavioral challenges in typical schools (Lingo, Slaton, & Jolivette, 2006; Strong, Wehby, Falk, & Lane, 2004) and same age youth involved with the juvenile justice system (Allen-DeBoer, Malmgren, & Glass, 2006; Drakeford, 2002; Houchins, Jolivette, Krezmien, & Baltodano, 2008; Malmgren & Leone, 2000). This body of literature suggests that CR is an effective intervention for improving reading skills for elementary and middle school students with and without disabilities who read several grade levels below their peers. Both Lingo et al. (2006) and Strong et al. (2004) conducted single-subject studies with middle school students to examine the effects of CR measuring both pre/post reading achievement and reading fluency growth. Both studies yielded moderate reading improvements for participating students.

While CR has been researched with students with E/BD and has been shown to be effective at minimizing the reading achievement gap, researchers suggest effective interventions are not always implemented in educational settings once the support of researchers or other external personnel has been withdrawn (Tankersley, Landrum, & Cook, 2004). There are many possible reasons for this, including: (a) limited resources (time and money), (b) lack of administrative support, (c) teacher buy-in or social validity of the intervention, (d) competing curriculum from state mandates, and (e) student behavior (Sutherland & Morgan, 2003).

Because teacher and student behavior are contributing factors in implementing interventions such as CR to fidelity, it is important to
READERS WITH EBD AND THEIR TEACHERS

gain a better understanding of their beliefs about reading instruction in general and specifically CR. The idea that student attitudes about reading or reading motivation impact reading growth has been demonstrated by Drakeford (2002) and Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, and Scammacca (2008). These authors suggest that by understanding and developing interventions matching levels of reading motivation or attitudes about reading, the interventions may become more effective in improving reading growth and reducing possible negative outcomes. One way to gain an understanding of attitudes about reading in general and those related to specific reading interventions, such as CR, is to ask open-ended questions to allow teachers and students to express their beliefs and concerns in an unbiased, nonthreatening format. To date, little has been written about how teachers and struggling students perceive reading in general and specific reading interventions (i.e., CR).

One such study completed by the current authors, as the original research to this study, examined the effects of CR on reading subtests of achievement and oral reading fluency (McDaniel, Houchins, & Gagne’ (in press). A total of 25 students (4th-8th grade) with EBD received CR instruction from six teachers because they were at least one reading grade level behind their peers and placed in either level A, B1, or B2 of the CR program. During baseline, students received typical reading instruction using the reading program adopted by the county (i.e., the Language! program). Beginning in the fifth week, all students received an average of 2.5 one-hour sessions of CR instruction in ability leveled groups per week.

A total of eighteen percent of the total number of lessons in this study were assessed for fidelity with a rate of 92.8% and interobserver agreement on that at 92%. Interobserver agreement on the dependent variable was assessed for 35.1% of the sessions at 97.8%. Results from the pre/post reading achievement assessment indicated statistically significant fluency, reading comprehension, word attack, and letter-word identification subtest gains on the Woodcock Johnson-III (WJ-III: Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) as well as statistically significant general reading achievement gains (α = .05). Additionally, weekly fluency data analyzed with hierarchical linear modeling indicated fluency growth during baseline was significant with an increase of 1.592 words per week and an increase in 3.563 during intervention. At the conclusion of the study, the teachers indicated positive and encouraging indications on a social validity questionnaire. To better understand the difficulty with translating research-to-practice and to discount possible reasons for discontinuing effective programming provided by Southerland and Morgan (2003), the current study
attempted to gain a more in-depth understanding of teacher perceptions of the use of CR and students’ attitudes about reading and perceptions of CR to specifically address the teacher and student buy-in explanations for CR discontinuation. This study sought to assess teacher buy-in through: (1) beliefs about student improvement with the CR intervention, (2) perception of implementation of CR, and (3) perceptions as to whether or not CR is an effective intervention for students with E/BD; and student buy-in through: (1) students with E/BD perceptions of reading, and (2) beliefs related to receiving CR instruction for eight weeks.

Method

Participants

Students. The 18 student participants in this study were those from the McDaniel et al. (in press) described above. The students were 9-14 years old in grades 4-8 served in a Psychoeducational program in the Southeast for students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. Students were at least one grade level behind in reading and tested into one of the first three levels of the CR Decoding program. All students were offered the opportunity to participate in a group discussion about reading and CR at the conclusion of the prior study: 18 of the 25 students assented to participate. See Table 1 for student demographic information.

Teachers. Three of the six teachers and one school psychologist who repeatedly monitored CR instruction from the original study participated in interviews via written responses. See Table 2 for teacher and psychologist demographic information.

Procedure

The teachers and school psychologists worked at two different psychoeducational programs (elementary and middle schools), therefore they were unable to participate in a traditional focus group due to lack of common planning time and location. As an alternative, two of the teachers discussed their responses together and recorded them on an audio recorder while the other teacher and school psychologist wrote responses independently to the questions. Teachers were given a survey with the following questions: (1) how do you feel about the small, ability level CR groupings, (2) what do you like and dislike about CR, (3) how did the students respond to CR instruction (academically and behaviorally), (4) do you think CR is a feasible program with this population, (5) what are the positive and negative aspects of CR implementation, (6) do you think CR is effective with this population, (7) what do you think should change about CR, and (8) is there
### Table 1
Student Demographics

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</tr>
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### Table 2
Teacher and Psychologist Demographics

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</table>
anything else we should know about the CR program?

Students participated in one of two traditional focus groups based on grade level (elementary and middle school). Eight students were in the elementary group and ten were in the middle school group. These focus groups were led by a novel school staff member not associated with the original McDaniel et al. (in press) study. A novel staff member was used to lead the focus groups. The student focus groups were shorter than scheduled because in both focus groups, students displayed inappropriate behavior and the staff member leading each focus group decided to discontinue discussion after only 20 minutes. As a focus group, students were asked the following questions: (1) how do you feel about reading in general, (2) how do you feel the CR reading groups went, (3) what do you like about the CR program, (4) what do you not like about CR, (5) do you feel like you need help to be a better reader, (6) how do you feel about your weekly fluency tests, and (7) what information do you want me to know about your reading classes or CR in general? Each student focus group lasted approximately 20 minutes and were audio taped.

Data Analysis Procedures

Student focus groups and teacher survey responses were reviewed and analyzed by two persons, one of which was not part of the McDaniel et al. (in press) study. The Constant Comparative Method (CCM) of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to identify common themes and categories for teachers and students with the modification of analysis of information received from interviews as well as focus groups.

First, the teacher interview responses and student focus group responses were transcribed. Two reviewers then independently read the adult and student responses. During this time, they were both looking for common emerging themes in the categories: student and adult. There was no pre-determined number of possible emerging themes; however, approximately five themes were identified each category. After identifying emerging themes, each reviewer gathered supporting student and teacher quotations for each. Next, the reviewers shared the identified themes and supporting quotations with one other to determine a list of common themes. During this time, the reviewers identified similar themes. In these cases, the reviewers agreed on acceptable wording for the themes and supporting quotations. For the few dissimilar themes identified, they reviewed the supporting quotations and decided whether to keep or remove the themes. The few themes that were removed were repetitious with other accepted themes.
Once the student and teacher themes were established, data were further organized by sentence/phrase responses, and categorized into similar group responses. The analysis was structured in this manner because the discussions during the focus groups and responses from the interview responses often times were reciprocal across participants rather than one participant expressing a complete thought to specific questions.

Then, reviewers examined responses separately for themes which emerged from similar responses across participants. Separate student and teacher themes as well as common themes to both groups were developed. Themes developed separately were reviewed then cooperatively between both reviewers. Themes consistent between the two reviewers were accepted while those deemed inconsistent were discarded. Each agreed upon theme was examined for interrelationships collaboratively by the reviewers.

**Results**

The analyses produced nine interconnected themes which included five from the teacher groups and four from the student groups illustrating teacher buy-in and student reading motivation and perceptions of CR. Teacher themes are described first, followed by student themes. Then the interconnectedness of the themes across groups along with limitations and future research directions are discussed.

**Teacher Themes**

*Technical issues.* Technical issues focus on the process of implementing the CR intervention in self-contained settings with students with E/BD. For example, teachers reported scheduling concerns. Scheduling concerns centered around the ability groups which were formed for CR instruction based on the placement test. Students were required to move classrooms to receive instruction by different teachers for CR instruction. Teachers described frustration with switching student instructional groups which they reported disrupted the overall reading groups. In addition to predictable scheduling concerns, teachers also reported the frequently chaotic classroom environments leading to more schedule disruptions. One teacher reported that “we didn’t get to it (reading) as often as we would like to because something (misbehavior) was happening somewhere.”

Second, scheduling concerns within a class also were expressed. For example, some parents did not grant consent for student participation and some students did not meet inclusionary criteria; thus, multiple reading groups within the class were necessary. A teacher stated, “... juggling four groups because of the group that didn’t receive any
‘CR’ instruction ... and paraprofessional issues ... made it a little more difficult. Another teacher stated that while students were “placed well by levels” she had a group that “was not part of the program at all, so ... the challenge was dealing with the kids over here doing CR while having a slew of kids over there that were doing work on standards based instruction ... causing a lot of distractions.” Compounding the multiple reading levels in the classroom, teachers also reported problems with interference between simultaneous instruction by the paraprofessional and teacher (i.e., “CR is loud and I could hear her...she could hear me”).

A third technical issue, commonly but not unanimously reported, was the assigned CR levels of the students. For example, a few teachers thought the students had not shown their true abilities during the assessment process and “there were a few who were really bored. They could do it without hardly even going through the motions.” These teachers stated that they would like the opportunity to re-assess students after the groups had been formed if students showed progress (e.g., “if someone is on level A and getting it really easy, I would like to try him out on a higher level”).

Effectiveness. When asked if the CR intervention was effective, the teachers responded “absolutely.” For example, a teacher said she was “actually able to see the progress in my kids.” The teachers stated that initially they were “not willing to take CR on” but then “within the first week my whole attitude changed.” One particular teacher stated that student progress and productiveness improved immediately. In addition, the teachers agreed the CR intervention addressed their students reading problems in an age appropriate manner.

Ease of implementation. Initially, the teachers viewed the CR intervention program as a limitation (e.g., “I was like oh no, another scripted program”). It took the teachers time to become fluent in presenting the material using the script, but overtime they became more fluent in delivering the CR intervention. Though the teachers were initially skeptical of CR being a scripted program, one teacher reported in the end, “I would say I like the way the instruction is scripted.” The teachers stated the CR intervention was easy to deliver and required less planning time than traditional reading programs.

Behavioral concerns. The teachers reported a misunderstanding between the CR intervention and its effects on student problem behavior within their classes. Initially, the teachers did not apply any behavioral expectations with their students during the CR intervention and reported some students showed resistance during the CR sessions (e.g., “some students showed resistance to changing classrooms for group” and “the majority of students didn’t find motivation”). While
changing classrooms quickly became easier for teachers and students, one teacher reported that his students continued to struggle with completing their CR lessons. The teacher provided positive reinforcement strategies for student participation and the teacher explained “once classroom management practices were modified, it went well.” The teachers suggest that “to address behavior concerns prior to implementation, it is required to set up the expectation for participation with a solid reason and benefit of receiving this program.”

Endorsement of corrective reading. In addition to determining if teachers and students perceived CR as beneficial, it also was important to determine whether or not, if given the choice, teachers would choose to continue to use CR. To this point, teachers reported that the CR intervention was appropriate for the self-contained setting and the students with E/BD they teach (e.g., “it should clearly be implemented across all levels and other teachers should do it every day”). Further, teachers provided a similar reason for endorsing CR implementation in the future. They reported the structure of the program “to be helpful for students with E/BD because it addresses their weaknesses without treating them like they are in kindergarten” as well as it teaches skills such as “reviewing past and present remedial skills without being condescending.” Finally, the teachers clearly stated interest in using the CR intervention as the reading program in the future because students didn’t ask “why do we have to do this.”

Student Themes

Reading attitudes. Student attitudes about reading affect the implementation and effectiveness of reading programs so they were asked general questions about reading. When asked if students thought they needed help to read better, they generally agreed that they needed help. Only two students said they need “a little bit” of help and none said they did not need help. Students also were asked whether or not they like reading and most students answered that they did. Additional comments which provide insight into student reading attitudes were mentioned throughout the focus group discussions. For example, one student said, “I don’t like reading but I tolerate it and I got to read better.” Another student said, “I want to say big words, hard words.” These statements from students suggest that overall those involved with CR instruction were aware that they were in need of reading instruction and were motivated to learn how to read better.

Opinions of fluency probes. Students were asked about the weekly fluency probes they participated in during CR instruction. In their responses, students articulated the importance of the correct words per minute measure (e.g., “I felt like I got able to read over 180 words”).

Overall students stated that they liked the fluency probes (e.g., “felt good” and “it helps me so I can say them (words) better”) although a few students expressed discontent (e.g., “I didn’t think it was helpful”). The students commonly stated that they should be able to read grade level passages for the probes. One student said “the stories could be made for each grade” and another said “those stories were too easy…it should be grade level.”

Endorsement of corrective reading intervention. All of the students, except one, stated that the CR intervention was helpful. Students also made positive comments about CR (e.g., “I learned,” “it was okay,” “it’s cool,” and “it was fun”). Specifically, students reported liking the word attack activities (e.g., “I liked when we sounded out letters and…wrote the letters down”).

Suggestions for future participation. The students commonly reported they would like to participate in the CR intervention in the future. One student elaborated saying, “I want to be in it again, but I want to be in a higher level. The main thing I want is to be moved up a level.” While most students enjoyed CR, some students expressed differing opinions. One student said, “I didn’t like it..it was too easy..it didn’t really help me at all.” Another student responded, “I don’t want to be in this group.” One specific change the students wanted was to shorten the instructional sessions (e.g., “I didn’t like it because it was long,” and “too long”).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand teacher and student perceptions of reading instruction, specifically CR, provided as part of an eight-week program. The themes presented from this study suggest convergence among teachers and students in the areas of: (1) overall approval of the program, (2) interest in future participation with CR, and (3) the need for modifications to CR. Overall, teachers and students valued reading instruction and viewed CR as an effective intervention which improved reading achievement. Because teachers and students viewed CR as an effective program, they also commonly stated that they would like to continue to be involved with CR instruction.

Although CR was generally endorsed, teachers and students also pointed to improvements that could be made to make it more appropriate and easier to implement. Students agreed that the reading group classes lasted too long. A common suggestion for improvement from teachers and students was for the instruction to be delivered on the appropriate grade level (e.g., interest level). Some students believed their level was too easy and some teachers thought the stu-
Students had been placed incorrectly into their reading group. Along this line, students stated the reading passages used for the fluency probes should be on grade level in contrast to the fourth grade probes used.

Commonalities across teachers arose in the area of behavioral concerns. Teachers described behavioral problems as barriers to instruction but believed CR was an effective intervention. One teacher required additional classroom management support from research staff during the McDaniel et al. (in press) study and that teacher reported positive changes after receiving support. An important aspect discussed by teachers was the ease with which CR was implemented. Teachers appreciated the scripted, comprehensive format provided by the CR program and even though mastery of its use was gained over time, they viewed CR as an easy reading program to use.

These findings support empirical research which suggests CR is a socially valid reading program for struggling readers and offers the perspective of students and teachers involved with implementation. Based on these results, teacher buy-in was obtained for CR. Further, based on the student themes, participating students were motivated to learn to read and perceived CR as an acceptable intervention. These two findings discount two of the five possible explanations effective interventions are discontinued by Sutherland and Morgan (2003). The remaining explanations include: limited resources, lack of administrative support, and competing curriculum from state mandates. While it is possible the limited resources explanation could be applied to the discontinuation of CR, the original researcher offered to leave all of the CR materials used in the study to aid in the continuation of its use. With the increasing focus on state standards it was also possible that competing curriculum affected CR discontinuation. However, with the findings of this study it seems most likely that lack of administrative support affected CR discontinuation. Students in psychoeducational programs demonstrate intense and chronic behavior problems. It is possible that administrators discontinued CR when the researchers removed support due to a primary focus on behavior management.

The trend of discontinuing effective practices without research support is common among schools for students with severe behavior problems (Heward, 1994) and suggests a need for improvement in the translation between research and practice. This study is particularly important in bridging the gap between research-to-practice because it gives further insight into preferences and opinions of students and teachers involved with a research-based program.

The results from this study also articulate from the perspective of students who have experienced school failure and struggle to make appropriate choices that they know they need help reading, are
willing to get help, and enjoy learning. Similarly, the results of this study express the needs of teachers of students with E/BD to have effective programs to implement with useful modifications for their specific population.

The responses provided by the teachers and students were interesting. Given the common belief that scripted reading programs are boring and leave teachers with no means of being creative in delivering instruction, it was surprising to hear how much they appreciated the format of the CR lessons. In addition, it was surprising that teachers noticed and appreciated the balance between age and instructional level appropriateness of the CR program. We heard students with intensive behavioral and academic needs candidly express their desire for help with reading. Oftentimes the demeanor of students with E/BD who struggle academically suggests that they have disengaged from school and do not care to keep trying to learn. Also, it was surprising to hear students buy-in to a time intensive and challenging reading program and their desire to continue with the program.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study highlights the importance of understanding reading attitudes and opinions about implemented interventions, particularly for intense, challenging settings such as self-contained schools for students with EB/D. While the results were encouraging, several limitations exist. One limitation of this study was the combination of written and verbal interviews rather than focus group sessions across teachers. Responding individually to survey questions did not provide an opportunity for teacher interactions which may have led to a more in-depth evaluation of the study through discussion. Future researchers should explore potential opportunities for a focus group to be organized to increase the level of discussion no matter the schedules and location of the teachers. Future researchers should include teachers and members of the administrative team in one large, simultaneous focus group.

A limitation of the student focus groups was the limited duration of the discussions. Due to the novel staff member leading both focus groups, students displayed inappropriate behavior to such intensity the focus group was discontinued. Also, given the method of analysis, the interpretations found through the CCM method should be applied cautiously. Future research should a) schedule longer student focus group discussions with additional supervision, and b) combine other data collection methods (e.g., direct observation) with focus groups for data analysis triangulation.
Conclusion

This study highlights teacher and perceptions of the CR program and student attitudes toward reading. Overall teachers and students reported that the CR program was effective at addressing reading problems. These positive responses were balanced with suggestions for improving reading instruction for students with E/BD. Suggestions included placing students in their reading group more effectively, better scheduling and organizing reading instruction, and providing students with reading probes on their grade level. These results demonstrate that CR is one reading intervention for older struggling readers with E/BD that receives teacher buy-in and is perceived well by students, increasing the possibility that the effective intervention will be sustained. However, further support is needed to ensure CR sustainability such as resources and administrative support.

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