ABSTRACT

Exploring Elementary Special Educators’ Self-Efficacy Related to Behavior Data Collection for Behavior Reduction Before and After Peer Coaching: A Multiple Case Study

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This study addresses the problem surrounding low educator self-efficacy for data collection and behavior reduction strategies among elementary special educators. Educators working with students who present behavior challenges do not feel a strong sense of self-efficacy when it comes to data collection and behavior management. Due to this, educators are considering altering student placement for more restrictive settings. One opportunity for specialized professional development that offers one-to-one learning opportunities related to data collection and behavior reduction strategies is peer coaching.

In this study, I utilized a multiple case study approach to investigate educator experiences with a peer coaching program for data collection and behavior reduction strategies. The purpose of this study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. I held coaching appointments with four educators who taught students with disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors. I used questionnaires, interviews, field notes, and a
written reflection from each participant to investigate participants’ experiences with peer coaching.

There were five findings in this study. First, participants highlighted the importance of individualized feedback for personalized growth. Second, the participants described the benefits of collegiality and accountability through the peer coaching program. Third, participants discussed having feelings of apprehension prior to participating in the study. Fourth, participants discussed the benefits of this program utilizing their learning preferences. Lastly, two participants mentioned imposter syndrome, and discussed how participation in this study aided with eliminating those feelings. This study has implications for special educators and special education coaches or administrators. This study revealed the impact of peer coaching on special educators struggling with feelings of low self-efficacy by providing a collaborative partnership with a peer to discuss practices and improve data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Rather than providing large-scale professional development on broad topics, districts should consider providing peer coaching opportunities with special educators who previously reported having low self-efficacy in data collection and behavior reduction strategies so that they receive individualized education on content that is relevant to their classrooms.

*Keywords:* data collection, behavior reduction, peer coach, professional development
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DEDICATION

To my past, present, and future students.

I am rooting for you. This work is for you.

To mom and dad, thank you for making my education a priority.

Your unconditional love has taken me to my highest of highs.

This journey would not have been possible without you.
CHAPTER ONE
Background and Needs Assessment

Introduction

In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, to struggle together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life.

—Albert Bandura

Educators’ lack of self-efficacy affects their ability to confidently reach students who display challenging behaviors in their classrooms (Khan et al., 2015, Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Bandura (1977) indicated that self-efficacy is comprised of four components: performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Self-efficacy can be described as one’s sense in his or her capacity to execute behaviors needed for specific attainments (Bandura, 1977). More recently, Moalosi (2013) explained that educator self-efficacy has a direct effect on behavior and academics and that addressing educator self-efficacy might contribute solutions to many problems that schools are currently facing. Moalosi (2013) described Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model as a positive strategy that could make impact on teachers.

One problem that U.S. schools face is that educators who work with students who have special learning needs often lack the knowledge and experience to collect classroom behavior data (Pence & St. Peter, 2018). These educators are unable to utilize specific behavior data to make data-informed decisions for classroom interventions that could potentially reduce their students’ inappropriate behavior (Bianco, 2010; Pellecchia et al., 2011). Pellecchia et al. (2011) indicated there is a large responsibility placed on special
educators due to the complexity of their role. Special educators often teach, provide accommodations, and modify the general curriculum for their students, and they are responsible for addressing students’ behaviors, which can be severe. Pellecchia et al. (2011) further indicated that the added pressures from intervening in problem behaviors result in special educators spending more time attending to students’ challenging behaviors rather than academically educating students (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). Addressing challenging behaviors in addition to the typical duties of special educators adds to their already complex and demanding role. These expectations create situations in which educators become burned out, lose confidence, and lack the self-efficacy needed to educate their unique students (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

One way to address the low teacher self-efficacy is by providing professional development opportunities (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). Kaufman and Ring (2011) indicated that providing one-to-one peer coaching opportunities for struggling special educators addressing areas such as data collection and behavior reduction strategies might increase their self-efficacy. Participating in vicarious experiences through modeling and receiving coaching feedback may create the opportunity for these educators to strive towards areas of refinement to alter their physiological and emotional state to increase self-efficacy (McLeskey et al., 2012). Existing research on educator efficacy reveals gaps indicating the need for more research about professional development opportunities for special educators (Pellecchia et al., 2011; Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). As such, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching.
Statement of the Problem

Educators need opportunities to refine and improve their data collection procedures, an essential practice that guides the learning experience for students in special education (Ruble et al., 2018). Hojnoski et al. (2009) explained the importance of data collection by describing how data collection portrays important parts of educational performance. Through data collection, special educators, parents, and other members of a student’s educational team become aware of the student’s behavior level (Hojnoski et al., 2009). This can aid a student’s team in making data-informed decisions. The data collected on students with disabilities heavily weigh into analyzing their appropriate programming and placements. If data indicates that students are successful in their current environments, then their placements are validated.

Behavior data is a pivotal resource for analyzing student performance in their least restrictive environment. Teachers analyze data when students exhibit problem behaviors to determine if they need to be placed in more restrictive settings to support their behaviors better. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (IDEA) mandated that both special education and general education teachers ensure students are involved in the general education setting as much as appropriately possible, collect progress data to report on individual goals, and ensure that students with disabilities have access to general education curriculum (IDEA, 1975). This mandate created the idea of mainstreaming. Francisco (2020) described mainstreaming as providing opportunities for all students to receive adequate instruction and education in age-appropriate settings among their similar-aged peers. Ongoing data collection is critical for ensuring that a student with a disability is mainstreamed within the general education curriculum (Huefner, 2000).
Behavior data should be reviewed frequently to assess a students’ least restrictive environment for proper placement. Carson (2015) clarified that without proper data collection that allows students to participate in generalized settings alongside their peers, improper and unethical decision-making occurs for student placement and educational programming, often placing them in separate school environments where they are ultimately excluded from their peers altogether. Research published shortly before the mandate of IDEA 1997 showed these elaborate students represented 6% of American schools (Hocutt, 1996). Hocutt (1996) examined these statistics further, finding that only 34% of special education students were educated in a regular classroom. In 2004, The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA) enforced a least restrictive environment mandate (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, 2004). Despite education advancements, The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2019) found that 3% of students in the United States were still educated in separate schools. This percentage represented roughly 219,000 students (NCES, 2019). Bemiller (2019) indicated that although the United States law ensures that education institutions provide equality to students with disabilities, students still experienced a lack of equity due to being placed in settings where educators were not properly trained. Despite updates to existing practices, researchers can further explore best practices to support special education students in mainstream environments (Bemiller, 2019).

Educators need opportunities to refine their data collection procedures so they can have the best information for applying behavior reduction strategies for classroom management. There appears to be a connection between data-driven strategies within classrooms and educator efficacy (Dibella-McCarthy et al., 1995; Dunn et al., 2013).
Miller and McDaniel (1995) explored a possible connection between low self-efficacy and found that the lack of knowledge of data-driven behavior reduction strategies for participating special educators had a direct impact on self-efficacy. More recently, Rubel et al. (2001) found that many special educators had difficulty applying data-based decisions into classroom practice and applications. Special educators need support in behavior data collection to increase behavior reduction strategies through best practice interventions (Ruble et al., 2018). One way to provide this support is through professional development. Dunn et al. (2013) explained how data-driven decision-making reform has effectively improved student learning. However, a need remains to aid teachers in becoming data-driven decision-makers.

Accurate decisions about student placement require effective data collection. Pence and St. Peter (2018) highlighted the need to train educators on descriptive data collection for evidence-based decision-making. Behavior data collection in special education requires knowledge and awareness of the antecedent, function, and consequence of each problem behavior to decrease the frequency of it occurring within the general education setting. Problem behaviors include any behaviors that disrupt the learning of the students engaging in the problem behavior or other students around them. Borgmeier et al. (2017) defined these three critical terms: An antecedent (a) consists of the triggers, routine, or timeframe presented immediately before a presenting problem behavior. A problem behavior (b) is the student’s presented action that is disruptive towards the learning of the student or their peers. The consequence (c) is the direct result of the presenting behavior. Most often, the consequence is closely connected to the function of a behavior. Dunlap and Fox (2011) defined the function of a behavior (f) as
an awareness of how a presenting challenging behavior is impacted by the events in the environment.

Research shows that educators lack the skills needed to effectively analyze student data for behavior reduction (Ruble et al., 2018). Pence and St. Peter (2018) gathered research about analyzing student data for behavior reduction and found that special educators were able to accurately record 64.5% of antecedents and consequences. The same group of educators correctly identified the antecedents and consequences for only 27% of instances of problem behavior. Pence and St. Peter (2018) revealed that it can be difficult for educators to understand all of the components of a problem behavior.

The information gathered in A-B-C data collection creates an essential document for special education students called a functional behavior assessment (Stahr et al., 2006). This document outlines key information concerning the antecedents, specific presenting behaviors, consequences, and functions of each behavior that is then analyzed and implemented into generalized settings to combat problem behaviors proactively. Addressing these behaviors proactively often requires creating a document where data is collected from the antecedents, behaviors, consequences, and functions through a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA).

Educators need frequent and active training to support interventions on problem behaviors. The information gathered through an FBA becomes implemented across all settings of the educational school day (Stahr et al., 2006). Educators use the findings in FBA plans to support a decrease in problem behaviors. Through analyzing behaviors in an FBA, educators then formulate a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Problem behaviors, otherwise known as target behaviors, are the behaviors that educators are
working to target. The behaviors educators aspire for their students to display are called replacement behaviors because they replace the target behaviors over time. Devdas-Samudre (2019) conveyed the importance of a behavior intervention plan as a personalized plan that outlines how to increase appropriate replacement behaviors and decrease target behaviors. Researchers deciphered that without this knowledge, educators cannot implement best practices to eliminate or decrease problem behaviors (Devdas, 2019; Dunn et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2017). Moore et al. (2017) conducted a study of 160 elementary educators, who reported that they were strong in the areas of prevention strategies but lacked the skills and training to effectively address individualized behavior strategies. As such, Moore et al. (2017) reported the need for future research, highlighting that implementation needed to be supported by better training and support on strategies for providing more intensified behavior intervention strategies for students displaying severe problem behaviors.

At the time of this study, a large school district in central Tennessee was experiencing a problem surrounding low educator self-efficacy for data collection and behavior reduction strategies among special educators. Special educators in this district were experiencing a high number of students who display aggression and high problem behaviors in general education settings. When classrooms house students who present problem behaviors, educators become responsible for providing interventions to decrease the presenting behaviors. Educators in this district reported perceptions of low educator efficacy, which directly affected their confidence and ability to attend to and intervene on these problem behaviors. Further, they have reported that they lack the knowledge of implementing professional best practices and feel a lack of confidence in data collection,
causing an increase in unethical placements of students displaying aggression. It seems some special educators in the district lacked the skills to collect data on the problem behaviors of students, were unable to determine the antecedent and functions of each problem behavior, and found themselves unable to provide behavior reduction strategies due to a lack of self-efficacy. Thus, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching.

**Literature Review**

The following sections include research related to the problem surrounding special educators who have low self-efficacy in the areas of behavior intervention and data collection. If educators understand the antecedents and functions of a behavior, they can collect data to make data-driven decisions. Gaining confidence in this skill allows educators to grow their efficacy and confidence in proactively addressing problem behaviors within the classroom to promote success for every student. The following literature review argues that targeting the antecedent and functions of behavior are best practices for reducing problem behaviors, that educators report feelings surrounding a lack of confidence in these practices, and that peer coaching is a best practice strategy for increasing the self-efficacy of educators.

First, I outline the concept of problem behaviors and the significance that those behaviors hold on classroom performance. Second, I detail the aspects of data collection for challenging behaviors. Third, I address the data collection for these behaviors and pinpoint the importance of utilizing the data to make informed data-driven decisions.
Fourth, I address how low self-efficacy impacts an educator’s ability to collect data accurately, feel confident interacting with behaviors, and utilize data for informed decision-making. Fifth, I outline the importance of peer coaching as a strategy to improve both data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Finally, I establish the benefits of peer coaching programs.

*Problem Behavior Components in Classrooms*

Problem behaviors are behaviors that disrupt the learning of students and their peers. Deusmund and Oedegaard (2014) explained that there is a deficit in exploring educator perceptions of problem behaviors, specifically when related to educator efficacy and lack of confidence. Without the knowledge about how to intervene in problem behaviors, educators’ lack of confidence will continue to escalate (Deusmund & Oedegaard, 2014). As these problem behaviors increase, it is important to center efforts and research around why the problem behaviors are occurring. These efforts and related research are important, as they support educators in proactively addressing the behaviors so that problem behaviors can be decreased over time, increasing a student’s ability to remain in a mainstream setting. The importance of this problem ties directly into behavior management within classrooms.

Educators in the United States face challenges related to classroom behavior management (Gu et al., 2011; Jacobsen, 2013). Jacobson (2013) showed that behavior management, along with educator awareness of behavior management, is one of the greatest problems that educators face. Jacobson further explained that behavior management gaps need to be addressed immediately. Problem behaviors occur in a variety of environments and present multiple behavior functions. Students and their
unique needs can cause behaviors to manifest in different ways, so noticing the variety of behaviors and using behavior management strategies can be challenging for educators (Anderson, 2015; Gu et al., 2011; Langone, 2002). The most efficient way towards helping educators understand behaviors and work towards addressing problem behaviors within a classroom is for special educators to collect A-B-C data to utilize when creating a functional behavioral analysis (Ingram et al., 2005). The concept of A-B-C data collection was introduced by Sidney Bijou to aid teachers in evaluating practices on student performance in behavior (Bijou, 1970).

A-B-C data can be influential when analyzing student behavior to find patterns (Borgmeier et al., 2017; Lanovaz et al., 2013; Lund et al., 1983). Educators can analyze these patterns to find areas where student behavior needs to be decreased. The A-B-C method includes exploring the antecedent of a problem behavior, or what happens right before the behavior occurs, and the function of a behavior, or what happens directly after the problem behavior occurs. Eckert et al. (2015) illustrated this method as a type of observation using the A-B-C recording to analyze the events for patterns. Behavior data collection, specifically A-B-C data recording, is essential to consider and understand to combat the sudden increase of problem behaviors in schools.

*Problem behavior increases in classrooms over time.* Problem behaviors that interfere and create issues within the classroom have worsened over time (Phillips & Mayer, 2012). Further, teaching practices in relation to interfering with problem behaviors have also worsened over time. Phillips and Mayer (2012) indicated that problem behaviors connect to inadequate teaching practices. Phillips and Mayer discovered that 62% of elementary special educators who have been teaching in the same
school for five or more years reported more student behaviors now than when they began teaching in their placement five years ago. This problem impacts many aspects of the classroom, including the success of a student and the confidence of an educator.

Classrooms lack the resources that aid in behavior reduction (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2018). Phillips and Mayer (2012) explored large pools of participants in multiple grade bands for statistical analysis to learn about their perceptions of classroom resources, and then they reported on the experiences of three participants to represent each grade band. One participant in the study explained that resources were lacking in the classroom to aid with behavior problems. Due to these factors, the participant explained that the majority of their time was spent trying to foster a safe environment for all students. Phillips and Mayer (2012) detailed that many educators across the United States experience this problem. Further, with a lack of educational coaching or training and a lack of resources, special educators did not feel confident in their teaching practices. Hocutt (1996) and Alabdallat (2021) explained that experienced special educators need more flexibility and better professional training that better equip them to lead the instruction of students with disabilities in more specialized settings or classrooms. A large factor determining the placement of a student in a more restrictive setting includes determining if their behaviors adversely affect student learning or the learning of a student’s peers.

When problem behaviors are disruptive towards the learning of the student in question, or that of their peers, the placement of a student comes into question. This presents a situation in which a student might be moved from a general education setting to a resource special education setting where they spend more time with specialized
educators and are isolated alongside their fellow peers with disabilities without interactions with non-disabled peers. Yildiz (2015) conducted a study analyzing 54 general education teachers and their engagement with the problem behaviors of 54 students with disabilities in Turkey. Both educator and student behaviors were recorded and analyzed to determine patterns. Yildiz indicated that educators reported that students identified as having disabilities had more problem behaviors than their peers. This student labeling created a situation where educators struggled to manage the classroom because they found themselves focusing more on behavior management than other classroom procedures. Yildiz further explained that this classroom disorder created space for educators to argue that students with behavioral disabilities should be educated in separate, specialized classrooms. However, Yildiz argued that educators need support so that they can better support their students instead of removing them from the classroom.

Educators need more effective training in behavior reduction to ensure that a student’s least restrictive environment is protected. Farmer et al. (2018) implied that more research, in addition to exploring efficacy to implement strategies for evidence-based practices within inclusive settings, is needed to address the importance of understanding that behavior management is a moving target. Behavior management is a growing field that requires special educators to evolve and adapt to current practices and strategies to combat the increases. The added pressures of keeping up with current best practices can be a large factor in current trends surrounding educator efficacy and confidence.

The added pressures of data collection and behavior reduction strategies can add even more stress to educators and impact their self-efficacy. Friedman-Krauss et al. (2014) explored the relation between student behavior problems and educator job stress.
by analyzing the perceptions of 69 preschool educators in 31 classrooms. Evidence suggested a relationship between student behavior problems and educator stress. Friedman-Krauss et al. (2014) acknowledged that more research is needed to explore the characteristics of educators that may influence the association between student behavior and educator stress. More research needs to be completed to find approaches that work towards addressing the challenging behaviors of students; these approaches may support special educators and their self-efficacy. The first step towards increasing special educators’ self-efficacy on behavior reduction strategy implementation and data collection may include ensuring that special educators have a full understanding of each A-B-C behavior component.

**Behavior components.** Problem behaviors have many different components that educators must understand before investigating a solution. Behaviors often have antecedents, which outline vital ideas or scenarios that trigger the behaviors into happening (Devdas, 2019). Devadas (2019) indicated that behaviors also hold functions, which are the identifying factor for why a student engages in problem behaviors. Analyzing those two components under an A-B-C format can be instrumental in further investigating challenging behaviors, collecting data to track them, and proposing solutions to decrease them.

Educators must understand the components of behaviors before planning interventions to reduce them. For example, Wood et al. (2018) explained that when educators use preventative strategies to stop behaviors from happening, they can eliminate the opportunity for that behavior to occur. Educators, however, first need to understand those behaviors fully (Wood et al., 2018). Understanding these components
includes knowing the antecedent of a student’s behavior, or identifying what happened directly before the behavior occurred (McMahon et al., 2020). McMahon et al. (2020) further explained that understanding challenging behaviors also includes defining the behavior. The definition needs to include criteria that allow educators to observe the behaviors and collect measurable data (Fisher et al., 2021).

**Behavior antecedents.** Antecedent-based interventions include proactively altering an environment before a problem behavior occurs to follow a preventative approach rather than a reactive approach (Schultz et al., 2017). Research previously identified a gap in special education for behavior research when it comes to antecedent based interventions. According to Johnson et al. (2019), “identifying these antecedents could lead to an understanding of teacher response and the development and implementation of preventative interventions in the classroom” (p. 5). Conroy and Sellers (2005), forefront researchers for analyzing behavior antecedents, indicated that manipulating antecedents is an effective and proactive strategy for behavior reduction. More recently, Johnson et al. (2019) designed a study in which antecedents of misbehavior were manipulated to provide educators with practical experience in interacting with them in the classroom. This study revealed that although behaviors are an inevitable part of classrooms, educators must work proactively to identify antecedents. Proactively identifying those antecedents allows educators to work towards eliminating those factors before they become detrimental to student outcomes. Identifying an antecedent of a behavior is often the first step to identifying patterns of behavior.

Identifying the antecedent of a problem behavior is one of the most critical aspects of data collection. Stakeholders may benefit from additional research focused on
understanding how special educators implement strategies to decrease problem behaviors. Although existing research has established a need for antecedent based interventions, educators still lack the confidence in how to incorporate antecedent-based interventions into practice. They need guidance through professional development to understand how to decipher antecedents from observed behaviors annotated on data sources (Johnson et al., 2015). Educators lack confidence because there is not a developed plan of action for interventions into daily instruction and training on the skills needed to combat this problem (Ross, 2016).

Ross (2016) conducted a study that focused on general education teachers, educator burnout, and lack of efficacy. The findings revealed that as educators lose confidence, they lose positive feelings about their students. Factors connected to feelings of low self-confidence include behavior management. Ross (2016) further indicated that when schools do not support educators and their efforts to address behaviors effectively and proactively in the classroom through current behavior reduction strategies, the educators sacrifice student engagement. This increases problem behaviors within classrooms. Ross explained that educators’ sense of self-efficacy correlates to their instructional behaviors. With this, it is important to ensure that educators are prepared for implementing behavior reduction strategies so that they can address behaviors proactively. These successful practices begin with an understanding of identifying behavior antecedents.

Ensuring that antecedent interventions are explicitly taught to educators is essential to offer proactive solutions to decrease problem behaviors in classrooms (Conroy & Stichter, 2003; Dunlap & Fox, 2011). Using proactive strategies should
increase the likelihood that students can be educated with their peers without disabilities. Wood et al. (2018) argued that “antecedent interventions offer a preventative approach, educators and practitioners may find these interventions as a positive and useful alternative to punishment-based interventions to manage challenging behaviors” (p. 2). Ellingson et al. (2000) conducted a study assessing educators and their abilities to conduct functional behavioral assessments on students with disabilities. Although research supports the use of antecedent-based interventions, best practice is to pair them with function-based interventions through A-B-C data collection (Lanovaz et al., 2013; Samudre, 2019). Ellingson et al. (2016) supported this notion by explaining the importance of using a combination of functional assessment procedures that work to instill confidence in the theories about each problem behavior. The best practice of behavior reduction strategies includes pairing antecedent-based interventions along with function-based interventions. Once a special educator has a full understanding of functional behavioral assessments, they are able to combine their findings with the A-B-C data to begin analyzing a function, or possible cause relating to the underlying behavior.

Behavior functions and analyzing A-B-C data. In addition to understanding the antecedent of each behavior, it is also important to understand the function of each problem behavior. Understanding the function of a behavior allows an educator to better understand why a student is participating in a behavior. Hojnoski and Gischlar (2009) indicated that “when intervening with social behaviors, it is important to attend to the function of the problematic behavior or the purpose that the behavior serves” (p. 35).
Ensuring that special educators understand this contributes to implementing programming into daily instruction to decrease or eliminate the problem behaviors.

Eckert (2005) examined how implementing this form of data collection and analyzing behaviors aided in identifying intervention components. This study indicated that A-B-C data collection, “provides additional information that can be used to alter instructional practices in the classroom” (2005, p. 525). Analyzing antecedent, function, and consequence data allow an educational team to conduct an FBA. Borgmeier et al. (2017) illustrated this process by stating, “for two decades, federal law has included language requiring the use of FBA to guide development of Positive Behavior Support Plans as a safeguard to protect the educational opportunities of students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)” (p. 114). FBAs address each student individually by identifying their problem behaviors, why they happen, when they happen, and outline data-based strategies that aid in decreasing them.

One purpose of an FBA is to identify the function of a behavior, or why it occurs. When an educator works to decrease problems surrounding a function of a behavior, they are engaging in function-based thinking. Borgmeier (2017) highlighted the importance of this method and the significance of ensuring that all educators and staff members understand the importance of function-based thinking, or proactively addressing behaviors by ensuring you are aware of why a student engages in them. Borgmeier indicated that providing function-based training to staff members allows them to better understand and address problem behaviors in the classroom. Finding ways to feasibly extend the use of function-based thinking is an important step in preparing staff and school members in educating students with problem behaviors.
Data Collection to Combat Problem Behaviors

This literature review highlights the importance of understanding the functions and antecedents of problem behaviors. Literature also supports using this information through data collection, such as the A-B-C format or functional behavior analysis, to make data-driven decisions (Dübers & Schmidt-Daffy, 2021; Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014). The data collected drives the plan and programming for each student. It may be important to reiterate that educators need training to establish the basis of skills needed to engage in data collection. Pence and St. Peter (2018) indicated that educators need training to master the required criterion for descriptive data used in FBAs. Research shows that A-B-C functional analysis made up 82% of publications surrounding functional analysis and functional behavior assessments (Anderson et al., 2015). The use of functional behavioral assessments creates opportunities to create the opportunity to implement evidenced based data-driven decisions for classroom success (Davis-Bianco, 2015; Mendes, 2018).

Functional behavioral assessments. Functional behavioral assessments are essential when creating a plan for classroom success for students who struggle with challenging behaviors. Jeong and Copeland (2020) indicated, “the results of an FBA are useful to develop effective interventions that can target antecedents to or consequences of problem behavior” (p. 2). A functional behavior assessment incorporates the information collected through the A-B-C data. If educators do not have this information, they cannot accurately form a plan of action for decreasing problem behaviors. Jeong and Copeland (2020) conducted a study to compare functional behavior-based interventions to non-functional behavioral-based interventions. The study showed that FBA interventions were
more successful and had more optimal outcomes in experimental studies in comparison to interventions that did not use FBA approaches and interventions.

Merlo et al. (2018) indicated that using FBA in education is considered best practice. However, Cooke (2014) found that the use of FBA plans was connected to feelings of low self-efficacy. Cooke (2014) further explained that student success and positive behavior have a positive correlation with educator self-efficacy. The more successful students are, while having specialized support for their problem behaviors, the higher the educator’s self-efficacy was shown to be. The lower the student success rate was with the combination of problem behaviors, the lower that educator’s self-efficacy was shown to be. Trepinski (2014) pointed to the lack of research connected to implementing FBA through instructions. Trepinski (2014) further explained that the lack of FBA instruction effected self-efficacy and implementing classroom behavior reduction strategies.

There are several strategies special educators can use to address behavior reduction (Bruni, 2018). Bruni (2018) indicated that as behavior assessment procedures have developed, the interventions selected by educators have been primarily based on analyzing behavior function rather than behavior form. One critical skill for special educators is the ability to support their students in learning to generalize skills across multiple settings. Generalization is the skill of achieving skills inside one environment and matching them within other environments. Many problems with utilizing this strategy in the classroom connect to educators who are unsure of how to generalize these strategies to each unique student. (Gresham et al., 2001) claimed that “functional analysis research suffers from threats to external validity in terms of generalizing outcomes to
other populations, methods, settings, and behaviors” (p. 170). Generalizability should be considered when constructing future training programs for educators who need to acquire the necessary skills to carry out strategies from one environment to another.

Making Evidence-based Data-driven Decisions

As educators research and plan best-practices for their classroom routines and procedures, it is important to ensure that interventions are data-driven. Marsh et al. (2006) defined data-based decision-making as, “educators, principals, and administrators systematically collecting and analyzing various types of data, to guide a range of decisions to help improve the success of students and schools” (p. 1). Additional research could provide needed information about professional development to enhance data-based decision-making and teach educators to implement these findings. Dun et al. (2013) indicated that future research could investigate the effects of training to address aspects of adapting data-based decision-making into practice, and educator engagement in these practices. Researchers have suggested that although educators have access to data, they often are unsure how to use it to make changes in instruction and teaching practices to promote student achievement (Anderson, 2015; Dembosky et al., 2005; Marsh & Farrell, 2015). Educators need training and coaching to help them develop the skills to independently implement data-based decisions for their teaching practices.

Educators are often tasked with the responsibility of self-reflecting on their own performance to drive instruction of students (Gutierez, 2015). Dubbers and Schmidt-Daffy (2021) explained, “while educators core responsibility is to provide high-quality instruction, they are also expected to engage in data-based decision-making to analyze and use data to improve instruction” (p. 1). One way to help stride an educator toward
data-based decision-making is through instructional coaching. Marsh et al. (2009) stated that instructional coaching is an avenue to provide educators with professional development opportunities for data-driven decision-making skills. Reflective thinking and content knowledge guide special educators towards achieving best practices for behavior reduction.

Decisions relating to the gaps in behavior reduction strategies require both self-reflection and content knowledge to generate and produce desired results for administrators and student performance. Dubbers and Schmidt-Daffy (2021) expressed that data-driven decision-making requires an extra time commitment in addition to teaching. This added pressure can hold a significant weight on both educator confidence and efficacy.

Data collection can be a daunting task for special educators. Educators often feel that they are the direct producer of their students’ performance and overall success (Wosnitiza et al., 2018). While collecting and reflecting on student data, educators are required to consider how their own content knowledge and practice produce student success. This can create a situation where educators lack the confidence and self-efficacy to make data-based decisions when working to reduce problem behaviors inside classrooms. There is a direct connection between data-driven decision-making and educator efficacy, and additional research is needed to explore special educators’ self-efficacy (Khan et al., 2015; Klassen et al., 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). Some teachers lack the skills and self-efficacy to collect data on the problem behaviors of students, leaving them unable to determine the antecedents or functions of each problem behavior and creating a lack of confidence in applying behavior reduction strategies.
Bandura (1994) defined perceived self-efficacy as individuals’ beliefs and understanding of their own abilities to achieve and reproduce certain levels of performance and skill. Further, self-efficacy carries a large influence on practices and methods. Bandura (1994) explained that these methods have a direct impact on an individual’s life and professional practices. An educator’s self-efficacy directly relates to an educator’s perception of their confidence. Abello (2018) explained that self-efficacy is enhanced by educators working to increase confidence, capability, displaying positive personal dispositions towards content, and motivating students. When efficacy is increased, educators can be more successful in reaching students.

The greater an educator’s sense of self-efficacy, the more confident they are in their role to enhance student learning. Educators also show a higher ability to endure when running into obstacles in the classroom in relation to enhancing student learning and applying professional knowledge into practice (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009; Van Der Sheer & Visscher, 2016). Educators’ perception of self-efficacy and their level of confidence directly interplay to give a full picture of an educator’s ability and beliefs of their skills. If an educator has a high sense of self-efficacy, they have the capacity to increase student motivation and performance as a direct product of their efficacy and content knowledge.

Lack of educator efficacy. If an educator does not have self-efficacy, they may not be confident in data collection or data implementation, and they may not be able to reduce problem behaviors within their professional practices. Zee and Kooman (2016) conducted a 40-year synthesis of research surrounding self-efficacy and explained that
educators with high efficacy tend to use proactive behavior strategies, help students achieve academically, and motivate students. Without a high sense of self-efficacy, educators might not feel confident in their data collection practices, which may impact their ability to implement behavior reduction strategies.

Self-efficacy and data-based decision-making skills are increased through participation in peer coaching programs, there remains implications and suggestions for further research in special education. Existing studies show that most limitations surrounding current research include small sample sizes, which limits generalization to larger groups. Other limitations include small time frames, leaving researchers wondering if peer coaching works for a short term but fails to achieve long term results. Finally, research suggests future studies should be completed to explore peer coaching for all levels of educators, not just pre-service or novice educators (Dellapenna, 2017).

*Lack of educator confidence.* Nolan and Molla (2017) explained that educator confidence blossoms from personal capital as educators become more familiar with the capacity to make decisions within their institutions. Data collection and data-driven decisions pose a heavy weight for educators to bare. Educational professionals need additional research to explore educator perception of data-driven decision-making. Farrell and Marsh (2016) indicated, “these [research] efforts may not tap into educators’ current instructional practices that involve making decisions based on results from classroom assessments, student work, and other types of assessments” (p. 451). Further, educators may benefit from additional support in order to implement behavior reduction strategies into everyday routines despite understanding that data-driven decisions are best practice (Moore et al., 2018; Ruble et al., 2018). It seems there is a noteworthy connection
between this problem and educator confidence. Malandrakis (2018) examined educator confidence by analyzing educator efficacy through a pre-intervention, post-intervention, and 6-month delay period to analyze educator confidence throughout an intervention period. Malandrakis (2018) compared educator self-efficacy and confidence before and after the intervention to establish the significance of professional development relating to educator efficacy and confidence. The findings showed that educator confidence and their ability to teach various aspects throughout the school day with self-efficacy are inadequate.

Dunn et al. (2013) presented findings that align with the critical need highlighted by Malandrakis (2018). Dunn et al. (2013) indicated that anxiety and lack of confidence surrounding data-based decision-making are directly connected to data-based decision-making efficacy. Understanding current patterns and trends in educator confidence can allow educational institutions to understand the importance of alleviating feelings of low confidence and efficacy by providing appropriate education and training. More recently, Schelling and Rubenstein (2020) showed that while educators understand the importance of and strive towards implementing data-based decisions, the process is still overwhelming and stressful to endure. It is essential for additional research to explore ways to increase the confidence and efficacy of educators so that they can strive towards implementing these methods.

When a deficit is in efficacy and confidence, it is important to identify the potential causes. O’Neill and Stephenson (2012) noted that while educators might be familiar with behavior reduction strategies, it may not mean they are confident enough and well prepared to implement the strategies into use. This provides evidence that
educators may need additional support to guide them from content knowledge of data-based decision-making to application-based behavior reduction strategies. O’Neill and Stephenson (2013) conducted a follow up study and deciphered that after participating educators who displayed low confidence completed educational programs, they felt more prepared and significantly more confident to implement behavior reduction strategies. The existing research establishes the importance of improving the confidence and efficacy of educators and their ability to collect and implement data to ensure that educators feel prepared to do so.

*Educator preparedness in data-based decision-making.* Research collected on perceptions of special educator efficacy showed existing connections between educator confidence in behavior reduction strategies and educator preparedness for classroom behavior reduction management (Dunn et al., 2013; Malendrakis 2018; O’Neil & Stephenson, 2013). When educators attend professional development, they acquire informed practices for immediate implementation. Meyers et al. (2017) defined these informed practices as “the skills that educators gained that they may use in their future work as educators” (p. 9). Educators can increase their current knowledge of best practices by studying by engaging in professional development. Informed practices do not come naturally, they must be embedded through professional learning opportunities that prepare educators with the breakdown of how to implement them into practice.

In order for special educators to effectively support the behavior needs of their students, preparation needs to be put into place for both the implementation and maintenance of practices (Reschley & Oliver, 2010). Educators need initial preparation for skill implementation and maintenance preparation to uphold their practices to current
evidence-based strategies. Tiano et al. (2006) conveyed that “72% of educators were displeased with the training they received in classroom behavior management while almost 75% of educators reported they were not prepared to manage students with special needs, including behavior problems” (pp. 220–221). This seems to suggest the issue that educators feeling underprepared is not exclusive to pre-service and first-year educators, but rather all educators teaching this population. In summation, educators feel underprepared and unequip to collect rich, descriptive data sources that are utilized in behavior reduction for problem behaviors, which increases feelings of low self-efficacy.

Peer Coaching to Combat Deficits in Behavior Reduction

When analyzing the history of peer coaching, clear benefits and patterns are established with the implementation of its practice. Joyce and Showers (1996) introduced the concept of peer coaching in 1980. Subsequently, peer coaching has become an effective way to collaborate with educators in similar settings, which improves and refines one’s educational practices.

Peer coaching is one research-supported strategy that combats problem behaviors within the classroom, increases confidence and content knowledge of best practices, and increases self-efficacy of teaching while using data-based decision-making to drive instruction (Jones, 2020). Robertson (2005) defined peer coaching as “a special sometimes reciprocal relationship between two people who work together to set professional goals and achieve them” (p. 24). In this relationship, a mentor educator who has specific content knowledge guides a mentee educator towards improving their professional practices in order to increase confidence, increase content knowledge, and improve on data-based decision-making through a relationship.
The key components of peer coaching include working through a voluntary relationship, including aspects of reflection and self-assessment, targeting specific goals of refinement, unpacking feedback of performance and emotional arousal, and examining feedback in a strength-based mindset instead of an evaluation-based mindset (Hooker, 2013; Robertson, 2005; Schwellnus et al., 2014). These aspects are put into place to allow the mentee educators to receive positively formed constructive feedback while having a mentor guide them. Schwellnus (2014) indicated that participants often reported that peer coaching processes presented large commitments for participating educators. The participating educators also reported that while peer coaching proposed a large time commitment, the benefits of peer coaching were worth the risks and costs of participation. Participants reported that peer coaching contributed largely to their professional development. Peer coaching enhances an educator’s professional knowledge while working to increase efficacy.

Effective peer coaching practices allow the mentor to utilize honest feedback so that participating mentee educators can utilize the specialized feedback to improve individual areas of growth. Kamarudin et al. (2020) explained that peer coaching can enhance an educator’s ability to alter their professional contexts by improving their knowledge of current methods and practices. Kamarudin et al. (2020) argued that in order for an educator to achieve self-awareness of current practices, honest feedback must be provided. Kamarudin et al. (2020) further indicated how difficult it can become for educators to receive this feedback formally from administrators. Often, feedback that is delivered informally through other practicing mentor educators can be more impactful and perhaps more easily accepted for immediate implementation. Peer coaching also
supports the development of educators and their practice while improving student outcomes and decreasing educators’ feelings of isolation, lack of confidence, and feelings of being inadequate to motivate students to achieve success (Brown, 2016). Coaches support educators in using data to make informed instructional decisions and utilize feedback to guide decisions for classroom success (Brown, 2016; Galluchi, 2010).

Special educators can benefit from peer coaching because they are afforded the opportunity to receive honest, timely feedback while improving current practices to reflect best-practices.

According to Showers and Joyce (1996), who are the pioneer researchers on this topic, peer coaching has aided almost all participating educators toward incorporating new teaching strategies into their professional practice. Peer coaching even allows for collaboration where educators shared and taught each other new models, creating the opportunity where the educators were receiving continued training in educational best practices. Peer coaching has the potential to hold a significant weight in increasing the self-efficacy of special educators for data collection and behavior reduction strategies. However, there remains a deficit in current research analyzing peer coaching and the weight it holds on reducing problem behaviors in the classroom. Rice et al. (2020) indicated that peer coaching effectiveness can be further explored to improve the ability to provide targeted coaching to enhance techniques for developing classroom behavior management. Peer coaching can address the gap between current practices increase collaboration and educator self-efficacy.

Further research compares peer coaching to other forms of educator supervision such as collaboration and peer coaching. Bowman and McCormick (2020) compared peer
coaching to existing educator collaboration in the field. They argued that while field experiences have been beneficial in the development of educator practices to date, there was a concern that these experiences are not reaching the full educational potential that they have the potential for. As a solution for the deficit, their research proposed supplementing peer coaching into the experience. Research shows that peer coaching provides accelerated career learning through initiating opportunities (Jones, 2020; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). These opportunities allow educators to work towards refining and adjusting current skills through immediate feedback while participating in the continued experimentation of alternative strategies because of informal evaluations from mentor educators (Bowman & McCormick, 2020; Kram & Parker, 2008). Cumming et al. (2021) completed a study involving 171 special educators who serve students with behavior disorders to explore the effects of peer support on self-efficacy. Their findings demonstrated that the educators who had more supportive working environments were better equipped to refine their practices to better manage caseloads, experienced less emotional exhaustion, and felt a greater sense of self-efficacy.

In the field of special education, it is important to gradually refine and adapt professional practices with the growing changes and evolution of modern-day programming and best practice (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). Peer coaching allows participating educators to do that by pairing educators together to facilitate academic conversations, reflections, and suggestions on how to improve to achieve desired effects for classroom success (Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Bruce & Ross, 2008b; Jao, 2013; Rice et al., 2020; Steinberg & Watkins, 2021). Mentoring is essential to helping individuals strengthen their abilities, pacing, and the knowledge required in today’s
workplaces. Reddy et al. (2021) stated, “the quality coach and teacher interactions and relationships is critical for forging engagement, motivation and receptivity in using data to modify classroom practices and interventions to better meet student needs” (pp. 36–37). This evidence supports the claim that peer coaching provides a mentoring experience that strengthens an educator’s efficacy while improving classroom procedures.

Benefits of Peer Coaching for Efficacy

Educators who participate in peer coaching programs feel motivated following participation in a peer coaching program, educators feel motivated and comfort in expanding their professional knowledge (Bowman & McCormick, 2020). Educators also reported that they felt increased comfort and confidence after participation (Overman, 2002). Peer coaching gives special educators the opportunity to build a relationship with their peer coach as a mentor educator and strive to grow professionally after receiving constructive criticism from the trusted mentor (Miller, 2011). An educator’s efficacy can increase when they collaborate with a peer who works in a similar role.

One of the greatest benefits of peer coaching is the opportunity for reflective practice. According to Jao (2013), “the reciprocal gain is one of the major benefits of peer coaching. Having an extra set of eyes in the classroom gives educators another perspective that they may not have come up with on their own reflections” (p. 291). It can be difficult for special educators to self-reflect on their own practices when they are only considering their own perceptions and reflections. An educator is able to become self-aware of the bigger picture when they have a trusted peer to provide effective feedback. Vidmar (2006) explained the process of reflective peer coaching and described this
process as a model where educators examine intentions and set goals prior to teaching, then reflect on them.

In this process, a mentor educator can help a mentee educator identify areas of growth for professional practice, and actively work and engage together toward improving those areas through post-observation reflection. Reflective peer coaching works to improve both educator practice and skill. Still, peer coaching engages and improves student success and achievement through enhancing an educator’s skills to the fullest capacity (Reddy et al., 2021). When educators actively reflect upon their experiences, engaging with mentors, and implementing feedback into everyday practice, they are not only able to see and achieve self-growth, but they are also able to facilitate and implement student growth. This may enhance educators’ self-efficacy and confidence in their practice.

Administrators need to analyze the significance that peer coaching has on increasing educator self-efficacy and confidence. Many existing research studies on this topic surround the idea of providing one-to-one peer coaching to novice, or non-achieving, educators to improve their practice. Pollard (2015) indicated that one-to-one peer coaching as professional development for novice educators that focused on specific educator needs, provided modeling for lessons, and other continued support ultimately helped hold the novice educators accountable, creating a pivotable experience. Accountability, combined with professional development uniquely tailored to areas of educator refinement can allow novice educators to achieve and enhance areas of professional growth, while increasing confidence and efficacy through growing professionally.
Ma et al. (2018) detailed peer coaching as a professional development strategy that words toward improving practices for in-service teachers. They further indicated that one-to-one peer coaching professional development program have positive impacts on educator efficacy and allows them to engage in standards-based data-driven teaching. They argued that when educators participate in peer coaching, they are not only able to master content experiences, but they are also able to receive information about their success through their peer relationships. Engaging in positive feedback allows educators to increase efficacy and encourages educators to continue taking risks in the classroom (Pollard, 2015). The opportunity to take risks inside the classroom allows educators to continue growing professionally to meet the challenges of their classroom. Pollard further explained that when educators receive validation for the growth they are making and can see the validation through increased student performance and achievement, they are able to feel more confident and their self-efficacy increases.

Research highlights the effectiveness of one-to-one peer coaching as an instructional tool to teach best practices while increasing educator efficacy (Goker, 2006; Jones, 2020). Brown (2016) indicated, “coaching strategies involve the sharing of knowledge and the use of problem-solving techniques to facilitate educator’s implementation of innovative instructional approaches and sustain changes in their practices” (p. 14). Educational coaching is a practice that has been utilized for decades in special education. Recently, the use of specialized peer coaching has become more preferred among educators (Crumley, 2020). Crumley (2020) explained that working with fellow educators and specialists that are experts in each skill set of education can offer a large impact on coaching. Peer coaching is professional development that
provides non-threatening, approachable feedback provided by a trusting mentor (Bruce & Ross, 2008). Brennan (2017) indicated that educators need training to master current skills for running effective classrooms.

In peer coaching, the coach can utilize experience and current practice to guide fellow educators who need growth in their specialized skillset. Steinberg and Watkins (2021) explained that peer coaching fosters powerful learning interactions among professionals who are not on the same team but are roughly equal in experience or position. Steinberg and Watkins (2021) indicated that the benefits of this experience include immersion in real-life dynamics, insight into diverse perspectives, opportunities to practice new skills in a safe place, inclusion into a robust accountability system, and connectivity to an enduring support network.

Creating an opportunity where behavior experts in the district and educators struggling with behavior data collection components can work together through a mentor and mentee relationship to provide and receive feedback would be instrumental in correcting the struggle that the district is facing. Steinberg and Watkins (2021) explained that peer coaching fosters a unique learning experience because it allows individuals to seek out opportunities to ask insightful questions while getting direct feedback to find helpful solutions. They outlined that many people struggle to get honest feedback at work, which creates the scenario where growth cannot be fostered as often. They further indicated that peer coaching develops a foundation of safety where feedback is given, accepted, and implemented. Steinberg and Watkins (2021) claim peer coaching is most effective because it allows individuals to have a peer designated for openly shared growth plans and accountability. Peer coaching can increase the self-efficacy of an educator. This
study links specific special educator professional development and increasing self-efficacy together to promote proactive and positive changes within an organization.

Synthesis of Literature

In this literature review, I addressed six areas of research. First, I outlined current literature surrounding problem behaviors in the classroom. Second, I shared literature related to the data collection for problem behaviors. Anderson et al. (2015) highlighted that understanding problem behaviors, and why students engage in them is critical for implementing strategies to reduce them. Third, I highlighted the importance of making evidence-based data-driven decisions. These data-driven decisions hold a significant weight for educators and work as a guiding roadmap to follow. Following this roadmap allows educators to work proactively to reduce problem behaviors (Davis-Bianco, 2010). Fourth, I provided literature surrounding educator efficacy for data collection procedures on behavior reeducation. Fifth, I provided literature highlighting peer coaching as a successful tool to combat deficits in behavior reduction. Finally, I included existing research highlighting the benefits of peer coaching programs.

Understanding how to reach the problem behaviors in each classroom allows teachers to feel more confident in their practices. Cumming et al. (2021) explained that when special educators experience a decrease in problem behaviors due to proactive interventions and programming, they can manage problem behaviors and classroom routines. This works to enhance the success of classrooms, which increasing educator self-efficacy and confidence. Jao (2013), Malleto et al. (1999), and Showers and Joyce (1996) outlined peer coaching is a research-based strategy that works to equip educators
with honest feedback that can be immediately implemented into practice, to enhance content knowledge and increase educator confidence.

Educators need support to collect useful data for analyzing problem behaviors within the classroom. Schelling and Rubenstein (2021) highlighted that teachers often refute using data-driven decision-making due to having feelings of resistance and hesitancy towards changing their assessment practices. They also indicated that educators may not be collecting the proper data, and they may struggle to make data-based decisions to combat problem behaviors. Further, they may also be experiencing a lack of confidence and educator efficacy in their abilities to alleviate the factors connected to this central problem. Brown (2016) indicated that peer coaching as a professional development opportunity can work to train educators to implement best practices strategies by providing opportunities to access specific, goal-oriented feedback in a trusted relationship. This relationship and tailored feedback can work to enhance an educator’s skill and potentially increase their confidence and self-efficacy to collect effective data that can be utilized in making data-based decisions relating to students displaying problem behaviors.

Although existing research supports the use of peer coaching as a professional development opportunity for increasing efficacy, additional research is needed to explore self-efficacy and data collection and implementation for behavior reduction. Research supported that the number of students in specialized schools for managing behaviors have barely changed in the last 20 years and outlines the importance of working to generalize individuals with disabilities (Bemiller, 2019; Huefner, 2000; IDEA, 1997; NCES, 2019).
Research is still needed to aid educators in increasing skills and efficacy to confidently educate students with extreme problem behaviors within mainstreamed settings.

Dun et al. (2013) indicated that direct instruction is needed to explicitly teach the skills needed to increase the efficacy of data collection procedures. Pence and St. Peter (2018) explained that special educators are feeling underprepared to implement behavior reduction strategies. This research shows there is a need to better explore in detail the impacts that peer coaching has on increasing efficacy for effective data collection and data-driven proactive intervention practices (Pence & St. Peter, 2018).

Research unveiled that peer coaching is an effective measure to increase educator efficacy and provide specialized training in specific growth areas (Hooker, 2013; Robertson, 2005; Schwellnus et al., 2014). The benefits of peer coaching are outlined in research, but there are few existing applications of utilizing peer coaching as a strategy to decrease problem behaviors. More research needs to be completed to explore the impacts of peer coaching on educator efficacy to make data-driven decisions for reducing problem behaviors in classrooms to ensure that students receive opportunities for mainstreaming. In this study, I explored how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. In the following section, I describe the theoretical framework I used in this study.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework I used in this multiple case study was Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as “a person’s set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective
situations” (p. 71). This theory connects to educators and their ability to believe in their abilities to implement necessary strategies to promote classroom success. Bandura (1977) explained that there are four components that make up self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. These four components formulate the self-efficacy judgments that individuals hold about themselves (see Figure 1).

![Efficacy Expectations Diagram](image)


These expectations of personal efficacy encompass aspects of peer coaching. Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model indicated that one’s perception of their self-efficacy is based on four components. Bandura and Adams (1977) explained that the largest indicator of efficacy information is tied to one’s performance accomplishments. Performance accomplishments make up the first component of self-efficacy and define the job task achievements of an educator. This component surrounds the mastery of experiences within the teaching environment. Bandura (1977) indicated that the second
self-efficacy judgment component includes the vicarious experiences of observing others succeed through modeling. Bautista (2011) explained that vicarious learning experiences can occur in multiple modalities such as, in person modeling, symbolic modeling, self-modeling, and cognitive modeling. Witnessing a professional engage in model programming and implementing learned strategies after reflective thinking into one’s own practice engages this form of self-efficacy judgments. The third component of self-efficacy judgments includes verbal persuasion. Wise and Trunnell (2001) argued that “when a trusted person who is considered knowledgeable about the task he or she believes in, the performer has the ability to perform the task. Through this, the performer’s ability can become stronger” (p. 269). The fourth self-judgment of efficacy component is one’s psychological state. Bandura (1977) explained this component as educator attribution, or what they can attribute to their setting through the confidence and fear reduction for their emotional state and abilities.

When analyzing Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model, there are clear connections to one-to-one peer coaching, the centralized topic for this multiple case study. Each component closely connects to the idea of peer coaching, and peer coaching’s ability to enhance self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977), there are four components related to self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. This model been used in other similar research studies. Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) utilized self-efficacy to explore transformative teaching. They indicated that self-efficacy is closely tied with transformative teaching, where dynamic relationships are created between mentor and mentee educators who engage in sharing knowledge and resources to promote student and individual teaching
growth. While most research surrounding Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model is positive, some literature suggests it is problematic. Eastman and Marzillier (1984) claimed that Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model did not distinguish between outcomes and efficacy expectations. Ultimately, they argued that one’s self-efficacy rating does not predict behavior. More current research disproved these claims (Khan et al., 2015; Klassen et al., 2011). Under the self-efficacy judgment model, educators are afforded the opportunity to improve their performance accomplishments through direct coaching and feedback (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Dellapenna, 2017; Jones, 2020). Peer coaches use vicarious experiences to model best practices in education for mentee educators. After participating in peer coaching and implementing the practices modeled by their mentors, mentee educators are better able to compare the modeling to their performance accomplishments, or what their practices looked like in the past. Lewis and Jones (2019) claimed that applying Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model to peer coaching is an effective tool for increasing self-efficacy because it allows educators to receive additional practice on skills previously seen as difficult or uncomfortable tasks. The mentee educators receive coaching and feedback from their mentors to analyze their past performance accomplishments to strive towards improving areas of refinement. Through this, they may have increased amounts of physiological and emotional status, or an increase in confidence and self-efficacy. Current research suggests that applying aspects of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model does predict behaviors (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Dellapenna, 2017; Jones, 2020; Lewis & Jones, 2019).
Conclusion: Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. Although there is significant research supporting the benefits of peer coaching, more research is needed to explore educators’ experiences with peer coaching related to data collection and behavior implementation strategies. Parker et al. (2015) called for more research on the peer coaching process to better understand the outcomes of peer coaching programs. They indicated that more studies need to assess the relational practices and positive outcomes associated with peer coaching. As such, in this multiple case study, I explored the experiences and self-efficacy of special educators who participated in a one-to-one peer coaching program in a large district in central Tennessee. Peer coaching is often defined as working with educators who report having students with intense levels of problem behaviors to teach data collection and aid them in implementing best practices for decreasing problem behaviors. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with behavior data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program?

2. What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching that focused specifically on behavior data collection and behavior reduction strategies?

This study promoted an opportunity for positive change within the professional practice of special educators included in the study, to support self-efficacy surrounding data collection and behavior reduction strategies. The peer coaching program outlined in this study made a positive difference for participating educators. If educators feel
confident and prepared to proactively intervene and implement data-informed, behavior reduction strategies, it is likely that their students will also become impacted directly through the proactive approaches (Eells, 2011).

In Chapter One, I outlined the problem, review of literature, and purpose of this multiple case study. In Chapter Two, I detail the research design, methodology, site, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations and delimitations surrounding the components of this study. I also include an overview of the peer coaching used in this study.
CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Introduction: Research Questions

The literature review focused on special educators’ self-efficacy of data collection and behavior reduction interventions. In the literature review, I identified a gap in the area of peer coaching programs for special educators struggling with behavior management and data collection. Although research supports utilizing peer coaching to enhance content knowledge and self-efficacy, additional research should explore educator experiences in a peer coaching program (Hooker, 2013; Robertson, 2005; Schwellnus et al., 2014). This multiple case study contributes to the literature by focusing on the experiences and self-efficacy of special educators who participated in a one-to-one peer coaching program in a large district in central Tennessee. The research questions that guided this multiple case study were:

1. How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with behavior data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program?

2. What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching that focused specifically on behavior data collection and behavior reduction strategies?

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

In my undergraduate studies, I explored special education with an emphasis on learning and behavioral disorders. Because I wanted to fully understand the positionality of all educators, I also received certification in general education so that I could always
strive to incorporate research-based strategies for mainstream settings into the instruction I provided for students with special learning needs. Through the practical experience in my first few years of teaching, I had significant concerns surrounding students with problem behaviors, how educators interact with those students, and the self-efficacy educators held concerning their abilities to proactively engage these students. Through my observations, I noticed an alarming increase in students moving from generalized settings to more restrictive settings.

In January of 2019, the school district I was working for experienced a traumatic event. The nature of this particular traumatic event impacted teachers’ concerns about students, their problem behaviors, and the potential for student mental and emotional disorders to manifest if interventions were not implemented. Educator self-efficacy became a major point of concern for teachers. As teachers began to question their ability to intervene on critical behaviors, most programs in the district experienced an over-referral into special education to proactively serve students with emotional behavioral disturbances, oppositional defiance disorders, and other mental and emotional health disabilities. While their efforts were out of caution and care to ensure that tragedy would not strike their district again, the caution almost created a situation in which students were not evaluated within generalized settings prior to being referred. Educators did not feel confident to interact with students with such unique, significant needs and referred the students in question to programs in which they knew the concerns would be addressed.

Through these observations, my curiosity piqued. I enrolled in a program to earn a Master of Education in Moderate to Severe Disabilities. Through these studies, I was able
to see clear definitions of each component of a problem behavior and interact with client cases that truly displayed characteristics that were best met in restrictive settings. Although these clinical experiences were helpful, they reinforced my concerns that students are often misplaced in restrictive settings to intervene on problem behaviors. I began to wonder how teachers could be better prepared and more confident proactively analyzing and intervening on problem behaviors within generalized settings.

After graduation, I accepted a position at a specialized public school in a large school district in central Tennessee. This setting is designed to run as an intervention program to rehabilitate students with significant problem behaviors by identifying antecedents, collecting A-B-C data, designating appropriate FBA plans, and continuing data collection to establish a functional program that meets the unique needs of every learner. Even in a specialized setting, I found that students had the skill sets to participate in mainstreamed programs but were still misplaced in more restrictive environments. It is possible that students were misplaced due educators’ low self-efficacy related to collecting appropriate data and applying data-driven best practice interventions for the proactive rehabilitation of problem behaviors.

I have a transformative worldview, which centers around power and justice-oriented research that works to promote change. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained that the transformative worldview arose in the 1980s and 1990s and was generated by individuals who were opposed to the postpositivist assumptions that were surrounded by power and social justice, discrimination, and oppression. Creswell and Creswell (2018) further explained that those with a transformative worldview value action plans that will change the lives of research participants. In this study, I employed action items to
increase teacher efficacy so that students could receive a secondhand impact that enhanced their education. Prior to working with my participants, I studied their responses to the initial questionnaire so I could better understand their perspectives. This allowed me to understand and identify their listed areas of improvement. I also consulted with the district’s special education coaches about services they typically provide to teachers. This enabled me to understand the resources available to the district so that I could advise each teacher. I worked alongside my participants to learn about their experiences with peer coaching as it related to their efficacy and used their experiences to raise consciousness for educational reform for special educators.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlighted that transformative worldview places a central importance on the lives and experiences of diverse groups that have typically been marginalized. I experienced a transformation in my thinking through my experiences working in a specialized day school. My experiences working with students with extreme challenging behaviors have allowed me to further analyze the problems that lie in special education. Lashley (2003) indicated that special educators are typically marginalized and understudied in many districts, especially female educators. Training providers and educational institutions cling to general education practices, leaving special educators without specialized training aligned to their day-to-day practices and procedures (Richards & Sze, 2005). In this multiple case study, I examined peer coaching experiences described by special educators, a group that faces marginalization in education.

Price and Valli (2005) indicated that research utilizing action implies that change is created. This type of research requires the researcher to be an agent of change. As a
professional in this setting, I am an agent of change who supports special educators, educator self-efficacy, and students who display problem behaviors. I believe that confident, devoted educators create environments of positivity and growth for the most challenging students. As an agent of change, I wanted to explore the experiences of educators in a peer coaching program.

Although my passions and experience fueled the purpose for this multiple case study, the opportunity for potential for research bias does exist. My professional role as a special day school educator and leadership member may create potential researcher bias when considering educators who do not serve students in that setting. It is possible that my position could cause me to feel that educators in typical day schools could benefit from more training in data collection and behavior reduction techniques when compared to educators in specialty settings. A final potential researcher bias that should be noted for this study was that I was working for the school district in this study. In the trustworthiness and authenticity section, I describe how I addressed each area of potential researcher bias.

I acted as the peer coach in the peer coaching program in this study. My expertise on this subject, paired with my experience as a leader in the organization prepared me to coach and aid these teachers towards improving their practices. To prepare for my role as a special education peer coach for this study, I ensured that I had all resources needed to guide my peer mentees. I collected resources on data collection and behavior reeducation strategies from the district SharePoint so that I could readily refer and direct my mentee teachers in the right direction as they brought questions to my attention. I also ensured that I gathered a good understanding of their concerns in the initial questionnaire and
interview, prior to starting the official peer coaching process. This helped me build a strong rapport with each participant, which would make their experiences more valuable and memorable.

**Theoretical Framework Application**

Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model was the theoretical framework I selected for this multiple case study. Bandura (2012) defined self-efficacy as “people’s belief in their capabilities” (p. 13). The purpose of believing in capabilities is to allow educators to have a high sense of self-efficacy and feel capable in the classroom. The concept of self-efficacy closely ties into a special educator’s ability to feel confident in knowledge about data collection and application towards implementing behavior reduction strategies (Cumming et al., 2021). Bandura (1977) explained that self-efficacy not only directly impacts the activities and environment an educator creates, but it also offers indication on how long an educator will endure obstacles and adverse experiences while continuing to feel capable and confident in the practices. The self-efficacy theory addresses four major areas related to the idea of perceived self-efficacy, or self-judgment. Bandura (1977) identified these areas as performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal.

Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgments model shaped the design of the research questions explored through this multiple case study. The research questions for this multiple case study allowed me to explore the perceptions of special educators’ self-efficacy before and after participating in peer coaching using the four components in Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgments model as a lens (see Table 1). The research questions allowed me to investigate participants’ experiences in a one-to-one peer
coaching program. Through exploring the participant’s experiences, I implemented modeling, coaching, and feedback to guide and refine their practices.

The theoretical framework selected for this multiple case study also guided the data collection process. I used multiple sources for data collection in alignment with components of the self-efficacy judgment model to explore participants’ perceived self-efficacy before and after peer coaching (see Table 1). Those sources included an initial questionnaire, an initial individual interview, field notes, a final interview, and a final written reflection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Judgment Model Components</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with behavior data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program?</td>
<td>• Performance Accomplishments</td>
<td>• Initial Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vicarious Experience</td>
<td>• Initial Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotional Arousal</td>
<td>• Weekly Appointment Field Notes Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Final Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Final Written Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching that focused specifically on behavior data collection and behavior reduction strategies?</td>
<td>• Performance Accomplishments</td>
<td>• Initial Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vicarious Experience</td>
<td>• Initial Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Verbal Persuasion</td>
<td>• Weekly Appointment Field Notes Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotional Arousal</td>
<td>• Final Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Final Written Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model also informed the data analysis. This theoretical framework allowed me to investigate the experiences of those who participated in the peer coaching to explore their perceived self-efficacy in data collection and behavior reduction strategies before and after peer coaching. I explored how
participants described their self-efficacy before and after participating in the peer coaching program, which targeted their performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, and emotional arousal outlined in the self-efficacy judgment model. The model outlines the importance of emotional arousal connected to one’s sense of self-efficacy. I analyzed the data sources collected from this study using an open coding process to look for changes in self-efficacy. I asked questions that would draw on the performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, and emotional arousal of each participant (see Table 2). Through the analysis of these sources, I uncovered themes related to the research questions when I explored if the participants reported changes in their confidence or self-efficacy. I also determined their reports of their experiences related to their performance accomplishments and emotional arousal after participation.

Table 2

*Interview Questions and Theoretical Framework Alignment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Judgment Model Component</th>
<th>Initial Interview Questions</th>
<th>Final Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Accomplishments</td>
<td>1, 3–5, 7–11</td>
<td>3–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious Experience</td>
<td>1–11</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Persuasion</td>
<td>8–11</td>
<td>5–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Arousal</td>
<td>1–11</td>
<td>2, 5, 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Research Design and Rationale*

The research design selected for this research study was a qualitative design using a multiple case study approach. Creswell and Poth (2018) described qualitative research as research that uses an approach to inquiry while focusing on a single phenomenon. Qualitative research uses extensive data collection to confirm the claims that engage and persuade the reader to feel passionate about the new information. I selected a qualitative
approach for this study so that I could collect an in-depth analysis using thick, rich description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Merriam and Grenier (2019) stated that qualitative research allows researchers to understand people and how they interact with the world around them. Stake (2010) explained that qualitative research aims to aid problems in professional practices. As a professional in this field, I selected qualitative research so that I could work to improve conditions in special education and offer a possible solution for increasing self-efficacy by bringing attention to the voices and experiences of teachers working in this field.

I implemented a case study design to investigate each participant’s experiences related to low self-efficacy when intervening and collecting data on behavior behaviors in the classroom. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described case study research as, “a design of inquiry where the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case” (p. 14). I selected a case study methodology to explore special educators’ perceived self-efficacy before and after peer coaching and to explore their experiences in peer coaching. Yin (2018) indicated that case studies contribute to the knowledge on individual group and organizational phenomenon. A case study approach was the most appropriate methodology for this population because I focused on better understanding educator self-efficacy and what could improve identified areas for growth through professional observations. I collected thick, rich descriptive data for each participant through multiple phases to determine changes in perceptions in their self-efficacy changed after participating in peer coaching.

More specifically, this study was a multiple case study. I chose a multiple case study for this research so that I could compare the experiences of special educators
participating in the one-to-one peer coaching because they reported having low self-efficacy in data collection and behavior reduction strategies. A multiple case exploration for this research allowed me to replicate the study (Yin, 2018), as I conducted the peer coaching with four participants in four different settings to explore the similarities and differences between cases. Table 3 includes an overview of the research design I used in this study.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initial Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initial Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weekly Appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Notes Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Final Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Final Written Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Site Selection and Participant Sampling

In this section, I outline the site and participant sample I chose for this multiple case study. The site I selected for this multiple case study was a large school district in central Tennessee where elementary special educators were experiencing the issue of low efficacy related to data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described that “qualitative researchers collect data in a field where participants are experiencing the issue” (p. 181). Yin (2018) described the importance of using purposeful sampling in multiple case studies. Purposeful sampling allowed me to be intentional in the selection of the special educators who were the participants in this
study. In this study, I utilized purposeful sampling to find participants who fit the criterion. I describe the site and participants in the sections that follow.

*Site*

The site for this multiple case study included four elementary schools within one large school district in central Tennessee. I chose this school district because, at the time of this study, I worked in the school district. The four schools were representative of the different quadrants that make up the school district and were geographically distanced from one another within the district. Patton (1990) indicated that geographical selection of participants is one way to select participants with maximum variation. Patton (1990) explained that thick rich description from several people within a large group of people can be valuable, especially if the cases are rich in information about the phenomenon. This school district divides students with disabilities into three grade bands. The elementary grade band is Kindergarten through fifth grade, the middle school grade band is sixth through eighth grade, and the high school grade band is ninth grade through 12+. The 12+ population supports students with disabilities who receive educational services until their 22nd birthday. I selected the elementary grade band because it has the largest number of behavior referrals to special day schools for problem behaviors. Each site was unique to the selected participant, meaning I did not select participants from the same schools. I gave the district and each site a pseudonym. I refer to the participating school district as Central Tennessee Public School District, and I refer to the participating school sites as Northwest Elementary, Northeast Elementary, Southwest Elementary, and Southeast Elementary (see Table 4).
Table 4

*Site Representation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quadrant Site Location</th>
<th>School (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Participant (Pseudonym)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Quadrant</td>
<td>Northwest Elementary</td>
<td>Clara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Quadrant</td>
<td>Northeast Elementary</td>
<td>Elanor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Quadrant</td>
<td>Southwest Elementary</td>
<td>Letti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Quadrant</td>
<td>Southeast Elementary</td>
<td>Abigail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I sought permission from the school district to conduct this study. I submitted a formal research request packet for the district’s gatekeeper team to review to proceed with the study. In the research packet, I included a formal letter of support from the director of special education for the district, providing a description of why this study would be beneficial for the district. The district gatekeeper team approved the study to begin in August of 2022. The district gatekeeper team approved the study with three conditions. First, the gatekeeper team provided an approved list of special educators who were eligible to participate. Second, they required that the researcher contact eligible participants in increments of 10 until I reached the desired sample size. Third, they required the researcher to gain additional permission from the participant’s principal before participating in the study.

*Participants*

The participants for this study included four participant elementary special educators located within the Central Tennessee Public School District. Central Tennessee Public School District is a pseudonym chosen to protect the confidentiality of the participating district. Smaller sample sizes utilized in case study sampling allowed me to explore the experiences and perspectives of special educators who participated in a one-
to-one peer coaching program. The participants have varying demographic characteristics (see Table 5). Utilizing participants who represent multiple groups of larger populations offers the ability to use the findings to support other special educators in the district. Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicated that “generalization occurs when qualitative researchers study additional cases and generalize findings to the new cases” (p. 200). Although this study is not generalizable, the findings may help my district in making decisions about programs, training, and interventions that might increase and maintain high educator efficacy. I interacted with all four participants as the peer coach. My positionality offered unique insight and fostered a connection with each of the participants because I was serving in a similar role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>School (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade Level Taught</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Northwest Elementary</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>K–5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elanor</td>
<td>Northeast Elementary</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>K–5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letti</td>
<td>Southwest Elementary</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>K–4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>Southeast Elementary</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>K–5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I used purposeful selection for this multiple case study after distributing an initial questionnaire to eligible participants. The initial questionnaire generated nine responses. The pool of responses was small due to the limitations I had for contacting participants set forth by district gatekeepers, but the pool of responses still allowed me to be selective. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined purposeful sampling as intentionally selecting participants and sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the
research questions. Being purposeful in participant selection allowed me to ensure that the participants could provide insights and information related to the research questions.

Suri and Harsh (2011) recommended using purposeful criterion-based sampling in qualitative research because this method of sampling provides access to key informants in the field who give rich information. Inclusion criteria for selection included educators who reported low feelings of self-efficacy, had between 1–20 years of teaching experience, held at least a bachelor’s degree, and indicated that they were open to constructive peer coaching feedback. The selected participants were special educators working in elementary grade bands. Participants were also educators who reported that problem behaviors occur within their professional setting. Exclusion criteria included educators who claimed they were not open to constructive peer coaching feedback, educators who did not interact with students with disabilities, educators who worked outside of the elementary grade band, and educators who did not report problem behaviors within their classrooms.

For this study, I selected a small sample size under the recommendations of Creswell and Creswell (2018), who indicated that case studies require four to five cases. Researchers cannot explore the details of the participant’s lived experiences within a large sample size as effectively as they can explore the lived experiences of a small sample of participants. The small sample size of four participants in this study allowed me to explore each participant’s experiences using thick, rich description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A small sample size allowed me to provide coaching in a one-to-one setting so that participants could receive the benefit of direct feedback. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained that participants should receive benefits of the study and benefit from
proposed treatments. I chose the participants in this study because of the possible benefits of engaging in peer coaching as professional development.

Data Collection Protocols and Procedures

The data collected in this multiple case study was instrumental for exploring the experiences of elementary special educators who participated in one-to-one peer coaching. The data I collected for this study included an initial questionnaire, initial interview, field notes I took during the peer coaching, a final interview, and a final written reflection. I describe these data collection sources in the sections that follow.

Data Collection Protocols

The data collection sources for this study included an initial questionnaire, an initial interview, field notes, a final interview, and a final written reflection. These sources allowed me to gain perspective on the participants’ experiences before, during, and after participating in the one-to-one peer coaching program. I include a description of each data collection source in the following sections.

Initial questionnaire. The initial questionnaire was important for this study so that I could purposefully select participants that met the criterion for the study. This initial questionnaire collected information about demographics and participants’ experiences surrounding peer coaching, data collection, and behavior reduction strategies (see Appendix B). It contained eight multiple choice questions and two open response reflection questions.

Initial interview. After the initial questionnaire, I met with each participant individually for an initial interview (see Appendix D). The interviews were important for
this study so that I could explore teachers’ self-efficacy before participating in peer coaching. Based on each participant’s needs, I then designed and provided coaching and feedback. I generated the questions in this study. I formulated the questions to touch on all four aspects of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model. I also formulated these questions in a matter that would allow participants to draw on their past and current experiences.

*Field notes protocol.* I scheduled four appointments, one each week for four weeks, with each participant as part of the peer coaching. The purpose of the peer coaching appointments was to discuss the behaviors of target students, to provide direct coaching and feedback, and to answer any existing questions or concerns throughout the peer coaching. Following each appointment, the participant would implement the feedback. I collected field notes at each appointment throughout the peer coaching to outline the coaching feedback that I provided, detail agendas and action items, and note participant questions or take-away points (see Appendix F).

*Final interview.* I conducted the final interview during the final appointment of the peer coaching program (see Appendix E). This interview contained nine open response questions geared to target participants to reflect on their experiences before and after the peer coaching. The purpose of the initial and final interviews was to understand each participant’s experiences related to the peer coaching. I formulated the questions address all four aspects of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model and offered participants opportunities to share their experiences.
Final written reflection. Two weeks after participating in peer coaching, each participant completed a final written reflection with two reflection questions related to their experiences with the peer coaching (Appendix G). I designed the final written reflection to explore the participants’ experiences in the peer coaching. I emailed the final written reflection questions to participants after the peer coaching so that the participants could reflect on their experiences. In the following sections, I describe the data collection procedures, which took place in four phases.

Phase One: Initial Questionnaire

To begin the first phase of data collection, I submitted to the Baylor University Office of Research Compliance for review and received a non-human subject research determination. This determination was required to proceed with the study in the district site. Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlighted the importance of obtaining necessary permissions for research by explaining that researchers act as gatekeepers and gain access to sites and participants by obtaining permission of individual authority. I described the study’s potential benefits to the district’s special education coaches, program directors, and behavior support team prior to conducting this study. The special education coaches and special education directors for all elementary schools in the district encouraged qualifying special educators to consider participating the study. The district gatekeeper indicated that I could only recruit special educators, or educators who work with students with disabilities, from an approved list. The district gatekeeper permitted me to contact potential participants in quantities of 10 until I reached my sample size (see Appendix C).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) conveyed that recruiting strategies for participants include making decisions about how to best locate and enroll participants in research
studies. They explained that it is important to effectively convey the potential benefits for involvement in recruitment letters so that potential participants have buy-in for participating. I also outlined the potential benefits of this study to participants on the consent form. For this study, I emailed potential participants to invite them to participate in the study (see Appendix B). The email contained a link to the consent form (see Appendix A) and the initial questionnaire (see Appendix C), which I designed using Qualtrics.

After a two-week time, I sorted through the submissions, utilizing the inclusion and exclusion criterion to filter participants to begin purposefully selecting cases for the study. Then I used maximum variation to intentionally select the four cases who reported experienced low self-efficacy due to interacting with behaviors in the classroom. I detail the second phase of data collection, the initial interview, in the following section.

Phase Two: Initial Interview

The second phase of this research included collecting an initial interview with four special educators who served as cases in this study. I contacted the four special educators who were selected to serve as cases to set up the initial interviews. The initial interviews took place using a video conferencing platform, and I recorded them so that I could easily transcribe them. How long did the interviews generally last? Throughout the interview, I asked a series of questions to explore educator self-efficacy and classroom behavior management (see Appendix D).

The purpose of this phase was to explore the participants’ reported low self-efficacy and to draw from their lived experiences that contributed to their feelings of low-self efficacy. This information aided me in using motivational interviewing to build
participant rapport by allowing me to understand their experiences before participating in
the peer coaching. Hettema et al. (2005) described motivational interviewing as a process
that allows researchers to help people work through adversity and commit to change. The
initial interview allowed me to help those who served as cases commit to changing their
practices by engaging in peer coaching. I describe the third phrase related to the study,
the components of the peer coaching, in the following section.

**Phase Three: Peer Coaching**

Next, I engaged with those who served as cases through one-to-one peer coaching
through five weekly appointments. In these appointments, I met with each participant
individually through a video conferencing platform. I scheduled each appointment based
on participant availability. In this phase, participants met with me to review the
components of A-B-C, identified a target student, received direct coaching through
practicing data collection on a mock student through a sample video, and had a final
interview. Throughout the duration of this phase, I collected field notes to outline each
appointment (see Appendix E). The field notes were helpful to annotate each
participant’s unique dispositions, questions, concerns, and specific case information. I
reviewed each participant’s prior field note prior to meeting with them for upcoming
appointments. At the end of each appointment, I sent each participant an email describing
what we did in the completed session, and bulleted goals and objectives that we would be
covering in our next appointment. I emailed each participant the night before our
scheduled session as a reminder. I include a detailed overview of what I addressed in
each appointment in Table 6. I further describe the five weekly appointments in the
paragraphs that follow.
Table 6

*Peer Coaching Appointments and Agenda Items*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointment</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment One</td>
<td>• Initial interviews take place in this appointment. Together we identify a target student, define the behaviors that the target student displays, discuss current classroom practices for behavior modification, and review a slideshow presentation defining the A-B-Cs of behavior. Following the video, the researcher and the participant brainstorm the current A-B-C of the target student’s behaviors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Appointment Two | • I explicitly teach antecedent and functions of behaviors by reviewing the components through a slideshow presentation.  
• Based on the behaviors reported in the previous appointment, we design a data collection sheet for target student. I explain the expectations for using this data sheet in detail.  
• Discuss and determine if anything needs to be added to the data sheet. Additions could take place if the participant felt like additional behavior categories were observed. |
| Appointment Three | • Practice mock data collection activity with video from (MrTony19, 2013). The video used for this activity was specific to each problem behavior that the participant is experiencing. The video replicates example behaviors that the participant is experiencing in their classroom.  
• As the video is playing, the participant takes mock data on the displayed behaviors. Once the video is complete, the researcher and the participant debrief the video and determine if the data was accurately collected. Coaching and feedback provided to enhance data collection skills. |
| Appointment Four | • Discuss and inquire about data collection in the classroom. The participant and the researcher will debrief any misconceptions about utilizing the data collection sheet.  
• The researcher and participant explore strategies to improve behaviors trending on the data collection sheets. |
| Appointment Five | • Final Interview  
• Final written reflection emailed out one week after final interview |
The first appointment in the peer coaching included the initial interview with participants. I asked the interview questions to gain a better understanding of each participant and give them an opportunity to reflect on their teaching experiences (see Appendix D). I provided an overview and discussion on the components of A-B-C. I presented these components using a slideshow presentation. Then, each participant identified a target student in this appointment. The target student selected was a student that the participating teachers indicated had problem behaviors within the classrooms. For protection of the target student’s identity, each participating teacher used a pseudonym when discussing the student. The last activity included brainstorming and debriefing potential A-B-C components for the target student.

In the second appointment of the peer coaching, I reviewed the A-B-C components with the participant. Then, I presented a designed data collection sheet for each participant’s target student and explained the implications for using the sheets. The problem behaviors displayed by the target students were defined on each data sheet to meet each student’s unique behaviors. These behavior definitions provided an overview of each behavior by providing a description of what the student does, or what the behavior looks like. They also included an intensity scale. The intensity scale described each behavior by defining the presentation of level one, two, and three behaviors. Level one behaviors indicated the lowest level of intensity, while level three behaviors indicated the most intense presentation of the behavior. This allowed each teacher to track if the behaviors were occurring. It also allowed each teacher to annotate how intense those behaviors were. The purpose of this was to help each teacher to identify lower-level intensities of each behavior so they could provide interventions before they
escalated. Each participant created these definitions and scales alongside their peer coach to reflect on their target student’s challenging behaviors.

I began the third appointment of the peer coaching by instructing each participant to watch a sample video and collect mock data. Together we watched a video case (MrTony19, 2013) in which a student displayed a problem behavior like the behaviors reported in their own classrooms. While observing these videos, I instructed the educators to collect data using the data collection sheet. I chose each video case based on the behaviors reported by each participant. Following the video, I discussed the video case and the student data the participant collected, providing peer coaching to support their data collection related to the student in the video case. The purpose of having each participant practice taking mock data was to give the participants an opportunity to practice data collection in real time. I also checked for the inclusion all components on the A-B-C data recording to check for understanding and retention of the material I addressed in the previous appointments.

The fourth appointment of the peer coaching served as a final opportunity to provide coaching, give feedback, and answer questions concerning the data collection sheet, behavior reduction strategies, or classroom management. This appointment was also for clarifying any misconceptions about the data collection. I provided specific suggestions to each participant depending upon any antecedents or consequences that were reported for each target student. I describe the fourth and final phase of data collection, the final interview occurring in appointment five and the final written reflection, in the following section.
Phase Four: Final Interview and Final Written Reflection

In appointment five, I conducted the final interview on Zoom using an interview protocol (see Appendix D). The purpose of the final interview was to establish the perceptions and perceived efficacy after peer coaching to use as a comparison with the initial interview. Two weeks after participation in this study, those who served as cases completed a final written reflection to share their experiences with the peer coaching (see Appendix G). Table 7 includes a timeline of the data collection and the data analysis, which I describe in the following sections.

Table 7

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2022</td>
<td>Obtain IRB approvals for research and research sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early July 2022</td>
<td>Submit research approval packet to district and gain approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late July 2022</td>
<td>Connect with research sites and send initial questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early August 2022</td>
<td>Identify participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-August 2022</td>
<td>Schedule initial interviews and peer coaching appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-August 2022</td>
<td>Conduct initial interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early September 2022</td>
<td>Hold peer coaching appointments, transcribe interviews after each appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-September 2022</td>
<td>Conduct qualitative data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late September 2022</td>
<td>Interpret and write findings and discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the data, I reviewed the data sources to explore the experiences for participating teachers. The data analysis occurred in three phases. I created the first stage
of data collection and analysis to act as a participant pooling stage. I collected the data to purposefully select participants using maximum variation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2018). The second phase of data collection and analysis served as an interview period to build rapport and implement motivational interviewing to motivate participants to be willing to engage in professional change. I aligned the questions I selected for this initial interview with the theoretical framework supporting this multiple case study (see Table 2). The third phase of data collection and analysis was a reflective, coaching practice to explore experiences. In this phase, I analyzed growth areas to target them individually through one-to-one peer coaching. I describe the three phases in the following sections.

*Phase One: Initial Data Collection*

The data analysis in phase one included preparing the data collected through the first initial questionnaire for easy analysis for case selection. This phase of the research supported participant selection while obtaining their demographic information. I sent the questionnaire out using Qualtrics. After I selected the participants, I used the data collected through the initial questionnaire using inductive coding. Inductive codes are codes that the researcher develops when directly analyzing the data (Vanover et al., 2021). These were words that reoccurred or showed similar patterns across all participants. Utilizing inductive codes allowed me to identify participant responses that reflected thick, rich description and to find the commonalities and differences across the cases.
Phase Two: Interview Analysis

The second phase of data analysis included analyzing transcribed interviews and reflections collected from participants through peer coaching. I transcribed and coded the interviews after each peer coaching appointment so that I could ask follow-up questions in the preceding appointments to further draw on their experiences. I analyzed the transcribed interviews and reflections for connecting themes and common misconceptions surrounding data collection and behavior reduction through a priori coding.

I conceptualized the initial interview data in two phases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The first phase of data included exploring educators’ self-reported feelings of low self-efficacy on the initial questionnaire. The second phase included exploring the connections between why an educator feels a low level of self-efficacy and their lived experiences. I explored the connections between each participant’s feelings of low self-efficacy and their lived experiences before and after participating in the peer coaching. This analysis process allowed for successful semi-structured interviews because the interviews allowed me to further explore participants’ initial questionnaire responses.

Phase Three: Peer Coaching Individual Analysis

Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained that when researchers have experiences in their research settings, the findings are more accurate. Through these peer coaching appointments, I addressed specific skills on A-B-C data recording and behavior reduction. In the appointments, I met with participants to discuss the classroom behaviors of an identified target student and discussed what antecedents and functions were present. Based on each participant’s experiences, I provided specific coaching strategies that were
tailored to those experiences. Some examples included guiding and prompting participants to incorporate behavior reinforcements such as token boards, if/then work systems, timers, reinforcements, and contingencies for classroom demands. I also included mock data collection so that participants could become familiar with the data sheet. Finally, I worked with the participant to design a replacement behavior for the target student. Throughout this stage, I documented field notes using a field notes protocol (see Appendix E) so that I could gather information about each appointment and make plans for future appointments.

**Phase Four: Participant Reflections After Peer Coaching**

The fourth stage for data analysis included analyzing the final interview transcript and the final written reflection responses. I compared the initial interview and final interview transcripts to explore participants’ experiences and noted if there were reports of increases in content knowledge, application, and self-efficacy. The process of comparing results derived independently by the researcher is known as cross-checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Two weeks after the final interview, I emailed the final written reflection to each participant. The final written reflection included two open response questionnaire questions. I analyzed the written responses to investigate each participant’s experiences on peer coaching.

**Phase Five: Cross-Case Analysis**

The fifth and final stage of the data analysis was the cross-case analysis. I organized the data collected by creating electronic participant files. Yin (2018) described cross-case analysis is a research method in which the researcher collects information across multiple cases to identify similar patterns to produce new knowledge. Creswell
and Creswell (2018) reported, “case study research involved a detailed description of the settings or individuals followed by an analysis of the data for themes or issues” (p. 198). I crafted detailed descriptions of four participants to create a case profile for each case after analyzing each data collection source for themes related to the research questions and the theoretical framework.

Because each participant detailed their lived experiences connecting to feelings of low self-efficacy, I was able to compare each participant’s responses for similarities and differences across the cases. In each appointment, I kept detailed field notes describing changes in their dispositions, annotated their questions and concerns, and outlined anything else that was relevant to self-efficacy. This allowed me to compare each participant’s experiences with the peer coaching process in my cross-case analysis. I also looked for changes in their reported self-efficacy and identified similarities and differences across the cases as part of the cross-case analysis.

**Trustworthiness and Authenticity**

Confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability are all important themes when establishing the trustworthiness and authenticity of a study. Confirmability addresses researcher bias by establishing the authenticity of a presented study. Miles et al. (2020) suggested that researchers work to be upfront and explicit in communicating personal assumptions and biases connected to the study. This multiple case study has strong ties and connections to my experiences as a special educator; therefore, it was important to establish my potential researcher biases to address objectivity and confirmability.
It is also important for researchers to establish dependability. Miles et al. (2020) indicated that researchers address dependability by formulating research questions that are clear and by ensuring that the research questions are congruent with the study design. Researchers address dependability by documenting and explaining the research procedures. I established dependability in this study by aligning my research questions to this study’s components (see Tables 1 and 2). I also used triangulation in this multiple case study to help address the four components in Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model by comparing each data source to the framework’s components. Miles et al. (2020) recounted that, “triangulation among complementary methods and data sources produced generally converging conclusions” (p. 306). In this study, I utilized multiple methods of data collection throughout multiple stages of the research to accurately evaluate the changes in special educator self-efficacy, establishing the dependability of the findings.

Researchers need to establish credibility. Miles et al. (2020) described credibility and the importance of using member checking and data triangulation techniques. These data are triangulated by including multiple sources that work together to formulate an understanding of the participant’s experiences and perceptions. Each source establishes triangulation because each source connects to the research questions and theoretical framework outlined in the study (see Table 1). Credibility is critical in research. Miles et al. (2020) indicated that through qualitative studies, researchers need to be descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical to best evaluate for meaning. Ensuring research includes thick, rich description to best interpret findings and data allows the readers to accurately evaluate the presented findings. I addressed credibility in this study by utilizing the thick,
rich descriptions from the interviews to reinforce the findings of the study. I conveyed the experiences of the participants to show the experiences that participants had while participating in the peer coaching.

Lastly, research needs to be transferrable. Transferability refers to the ability to generalize or transfer the findings of a study to other settings that have similar characteristics (Miles et al., 2020). This component is critical when providing future implications for expanding research on the topic. This study focused on elementary special educators in a large school district in central Tennessee. Transferability allows other educators to review the findings of this study, as they may inform future studies or considerations in their settings.

**Ethical Considerations**

While conducting research, it is critical to remain ethical and professional at every juncture of the research process. Students and educators navigate an intense world filled with ethical dilemmas and roadblocks. When considering ethics and constantly striving toward what is ethically appropriate, educators must understand that mainstream placements violate ethical considerations for students in the United States. Ethics also tie closely into self-efficacy. Mullen et al. (2015) connected these concepts by explaining that school professionals encounter many ethical situations that require confidence and content knowledge to navigate and utilize decision-making for the best-case scenario.

I took the following steps to ensure that all ethical considerations protect the participants, sites, and study findings. Before beginning this study, I submitted it to the Office of Research Compliance for review and received a non-human subject research determination (see Appendix A). Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained, “the ethical
considerations that need to be anticipated are extensive, and they are reflected through the research process” (p. 91). Throughout this multiple case study, I ethically considered and approached with fidelity by weighing the costs and benefits of participation in the study and by communicating the purpose of the research before the study began.

Before conducting the study, I used a consent form (see Appendix A) to ensure that all participants knew the possible benefits and potential risks of participation. Throughout the beginning of the study, I disclosed the purpose of the study to participants. This disclosure allowed participants to understand the research purpose. Further, this stage included learning about and respecting each participants’ norms and cultural differences while remaining sensitive to the unique population this study indirectly impacts. I gave each participant and site involved in the study a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. While collecting data, it was also critical to ensure that all participants received the same treatment. When working in a one-to-one peer coaching relationship, it can be easy to inadvertently cater to or favorite one mentee educator over the other. Therefore, I was consistent in the peer coaching with each participant by following the schedule in Table 6.

I electronically stored the data I collected using private-access folders to protect findings and data while organizing the material in appropriate categories. In addition, I analyzed all positive and negative findings and reported them as part of this study. This allowed me to avoid misleading participants or the target audiences in thinking the study focused only positive benefits.
Limitations and Delimitations

There are two limitations of this study. The first limitation I considered for this multiple case study was the reliance on data collection tools that include self-reporting. I relied on participants to self-report, which meant that I relied on them to contribute honest, in-depth feedback to draw from their experiences. This offers opportunity for lapses in data collection, gaps in data collection, or potentially skewed data collection. A second limitation for this study includes the proposed time commitment. Participants participated in five weeks of data collection, which added extra demands to the existing workload of special educators. Participants had to commit to completing the peer coaching, which may have limited those who agreed to participate. I originally planned to have five participants, but one person did not complete the study and therefore was excluded from my reported findings.

This study also has three delimitations. The first delimitation for this study includes the geographic location of site selection. The geographic location for this study is a delimitation because the participants all worked at one specific school district. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to other educational settings. A second delimitation was that some stakeholders related to the peer coaching were not included. For example, I did not include the perceptions of students, parents, IEP team members, or the special educators’ supervisors, such as principals. A third delimitation of this study is that the participants in this study only reflected the special educators in elementary grades.
Conclusion

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. Through an exploration of each case, I collected data that revealed the experiences of educators participating in one-to-one peer coaching and examine their self-efficacy with data collection and behavior reduction strategies.

In Chapter Two, I outlined the methods, participants, data collection, and data analysis for the proposed study. In this chapter, I detailed the connection between using Bandura (1977) self-efficacy judgment model and each stage of the research design. In Chapter Three, I share the study findings and a related discussion.
CHAPTER THREE

Results and Implications

Introduction: Research Questions

Chapter Three reveals the findings and implications related to this study, which focused on examining special educator self-efficacy after participating in one-to-one peer coaching. To analyze the data, I used an open coding process to engage with the data by searching for commonalities across the cases to yield connecting themes (Saldaña, 2015). In alignment with Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model, I collected and analyzed each participant’s perceptions and experiences throughout five weeks of peer coaching. The research questions that guided this multiple case study were:

1. How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with behavior data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program?

2. What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching that focused specifically on behavior data collection and behavior reduction strategies?

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. This study had five key findings. First, participants voiced that individualized feedback allows each teacher to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas in peer coaching. Second, participants voiced the impact of collegiality and accountability in peer coaching to promote productivity. Third, participants had past experiences that led to a sense of apprehension related to their abilities to lead an
effective classroom. Fourth, participants felt that peer coaching was aligned to their learning preferences, allowing them to get the most out of the personalized experience. Fifth, some participants were able to overcome feelings of imposter syndrome when participating in peer coaching.

In Chapter Three, I detail the participants’ experiences surrounding the one-to-one peer coaching program. First, I provide an overview of the study participants. Second, I outline each case through a participant profile and each participant’s responses related to the study’s research questions. After connecting each participant’s experiences to the research questions, I provide a summary of the participant’s overall experience in the peer coaching program. Third, I include a cross-case analysis drawing essential themes from each participant’s experiences and analyze them across the cases. Fourth, I discuss the study findings. Finally, I share the implications of one-to-one peer coaching program for the special educators in this study and provide recommendations for future research.

Case Profiles

The following study findings reveal the experiences of four special educators within the Central Tennessee Public School District. The participants have between 1 and 22 years of experience working as special educators. All participants enrolled in the study following a recruitment letter and indicated that they had low self-efficacy on data collection and behavior intervention strategies. I collected the participants’ data over a five-week-long period that included a peer coaching with an initial interview, weekly appointments, field note protocols, a final interview, and a final written reflective completed one week after participating in the program. The following sections provide a case profile of each participant.
Clara’s Case Profile

Clara was the only special educator at her elementary school until three weeks after the beginning of the 2022 school year, and she was tasked with serving all of the students with exceptionalities at her school. Even after a second special educator began working at the school, Clara still had a caseload of approximately 12 students, which was typical for this school district. Clara’s caseload reflected students that were in primary and intermediate grade levels. Clara also taught students with high-incidence and low-incidence classifications. While Clara’s caseload number was average, it was difficult to combine students with varying level of intellectual ability into one classroom. This makes Clara’s classroom unique, and details some of the difficulty Clara might have been experiencing when balancing all her roles and responsibilities. High-incidence disabilities occur most often, while low-incidence disabilities are rarer and occur less often. On the initial questionnaire, Clara expressed herself as experiencing extremely low self-efficacy in data collection procedures. Clara highlighted in her initial interview that she had apprehension about her practices in data collection and behavior reduction strategies. In the initial questionnaire, Clara described that she felt mostly comfortable with behavior intervention but had experiences that dramatically decreased her feelings of efficacy and capability in the last several years. Additionally, in the initial questionnaire, Clara indicated that there were opportunities available to her to further her knowledge and understanding of behavior intervention and data collection; however, Clara shared that she felt most comfortable and preferred to learn in individual or small group environments. The idea of peer coaching was appealing to Clara because she could learn through her preferred learning preference, individualized or small group instruction. She
reported in the initial interview that she had not had the opportunity to participate in a similar professional development opportunity such as a small group or individual program until participating in this study.

Clara’s changes in perceived self-efficacy. The first research question in this study was: How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with proactive data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program? To explore Clara’s description of her self-efficacy with data collection before and after the peer coaching, I first reviewed her responses on the initial questionnaire and her interview transcript. In her initial interview before participating in peer coaching, Clara described a lot of defeat when receiving coaching and feedback. She continued to bring up experiences of feeling defeat in her appointments, and I documented these same feelings in the field notes. Clara provided descriptions of several experiences that detailed feelings of being discouraged by her experiences with data collection in her initial interview, and I noted this discouragement in the field notes related to appointment two, during which I introduced the data collection sheet. Clara elaborated on these feelings by explaining that she did not feel like her peers thought she was doing her job well. Clara was the only special educator at her school, which that spread her services thin across her caseload because she was working with many students at the same time. She explained that she felt like her peers blamed her for when the special education students had problem behaviors within the classroom. Clara described in her initial interview that this impacted her confidence in data collection.

After analyzing the field notes I took from Clara’s appointments, the final interview, and the final written reflection, it was clear to me that her feelings on data
collection procedures differed significantly when compared with her feelings after her participation in peer coaching. Clara stated in her final questionnaire,

    I have learned so many things. I have been teaching 22 years, and I know a lot of stuff, but you have taught me things I didn’t know and gave me a new way of looking at things. It has been an amazing experience for me.

After the peer coaching, Clara shared that she felt encouraged, capable, and that her needs and questions were best met because she was able to adhere to her preferred learning style, allowing her to retain more information and get her questions answered efficiently. In appointment three, as indicated in my field notes, Clara stated, “peer coaching is more personal. We can sit together and talk about the specifics. In large groups you can’t talk about your specifics and can only cover a fraction of the stuff you can cover here.” Clara’s initial questionnaire and initial interview revealed that she shared feeling a great deal of apprehension towards collecting data. Before participation, Clara reported on her initial questionnaire, “I am somewhat confident, but I need to learn more.” She elaborated on this in her initial interview and stated, “I am not great at organizing data I struggle with executive functioning skills, so I really have to work hard at that.” Although Clara stated she was apprehensive about data collection, I noted in the field notes in appointments one and two that she was eager to learn.

    After her participation in peer coaching, Clara showed a drastic increase in perceived self-efficacy. When reflecting on her data collection procedures, Clara stated in her final interview,

    I do feel more confident after participating in this program. I think daily…my peer coach and I talked about this, and I can handle this! My confidence has grown. I used to be super confident to the point of arrogance. The student a couple years ago that I told you about knocked me to my knees. I had not been able to regain that confidence back but now I feel like I am doing the right thing again. I feel like I can do this!
Through comparison of her initial interview and final interview, Clara seemed to have an increased confidence after participating in peer coaching, and her apprehension towards collecting behavior data decreased significantly.

Clara also commented on her experiences relating to peer coaching and learning behavior reduction strategies through her interviews and her one-to-one coaching appointments. Clara’s experiences with behavior reduction before peer coaching showed a great deal of fear and apprehension. In her initial interview, Clara described the feelings she experienced after working with a student with severe behavior challenges who was transferred to a specialized day school. This experience highlighted Clara’s feelings of low self-efficacy before participation in the peer coaching program. Clara stated in her initial interview,

Until about four years ago, I was so confident that I could handle any behavior and then a student came my way that was an extreme challenge. I did everything that I was supposed to do. I pulled deep from my toolbelt and when I think about that situation I have some PTSD, which sounds ridiculous, but you know it really shook my confidence. We had a whole team dedicated to helping this child, but [they] needed that more intense [special day school] support. So it still feels like PTSD [when I work with students with behaviors] and I am still building back my confidence.

This experience and these feelings vary from Clara’s feelings after participating in the peer coaching.

After participation, Clara understood the components of data collection and reducing a student’s behavior before it reaches a crisis. In appointment four, as annotated in the field notes, Clara stated,

I finally understand now how all the aspects of behavior flow into each other. It is really cool to understand how to use it [the data collection sheet] and see the behaviors grow and change in front of you. Overall, there has been a big increase in my confidence especially when de-escalating a student when they display the smaller behaviors before they get big.
Clara was most excited about her increased efficacy in behavior reduction strategies and explained that she found comfort in knowing that she could have a peer to reach out to for future brainstorming and classroom planning. Before peer coaching, Clara’s initial questionnaire and initial interview detailed a sense of defeat and apprehension about receiving any form of feedback, especially relating to her behavior management. In Clara’s final interview, she stated,

I feel more relaxed in our interactions [receiving feedback] because you’re not someone who works at the board. We go through similar experiences in our roles, so I have learned a lot. It’s been wonderful. I feel refreshed with working with behaviors.

Clara attributed her increase in efficacy on data collection and behavior reduction to the accountability of the peer coaching program. Clara’s reflections on the peer coaching process showed that she believed her peer coach held her accountable in her practices.

*Clara's experiences with peer coaching.* The second research question in this study was: What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching focusing on proactive data collection and behavior reduction strategies? To explore Clara’s description of her self-efficacy with behavior reduction strategies before and after the peer coaching, I reviewed the field notes I annotated during her appointments, her final written reflection, and her final interview transcript. In both her final written reflection and her final interview, Clara noted having a positive experience through the peer coaching program.

Clara’s experiences displayed the importance of providing educators with unique professional learning experiences to increase their efficacy in data collection. Clara shared that she enjoyed this experience because it aligned with her learning preferences
and allowed her to experience collegiality with her peer coach. Clara’s sense of defeat after experiencing a circumstance in which she was unequipped to help a student seemed to impact her ability to feel self-efficacy when collecting behavior data inside her classroom. Clara indicated that she also had apprehension about data collection for problem behaviors in the classroom. In Clara’s initial interview, she recounted her ability to collect data, manage a classroom, and intervene on behaviors. Clara described an experience where she received administrative feedback and detailed how that experience gave her a sense of apprehension on her abilities to lead an effective classroom in this way:

Last year I was observed by my principal, and I had always had great observations, but this year it was a [below expectations rating]. I had never had a [below expectations rating] before, and that was just devastating. I felt I was evaluated unfairly. It really shook my confidence. I felt betrayed. I couldn’t do anything about the assessment, but I could have been more proactive [about behavior management].

Clara, having reported a sense of low self-efficacy, associated her poor evaluation with perceived inability to effectively educate her students. This experience provided Clara with an overwhelming feeling of apprehension surrounding her ability to effectively collect data on problem behaviors within the classroom and impacted her ability to effectively intervene on those behaviors.

Throughout the analysis of the field notes I took during Clara’s appointments, the final interview, and the final written reflection, it was evident that the peer coaching program influenced her feelings of self-efficacy in a positive way. Clara continuously commented on the program’s ability to have her specific questions answered efficiently as she learned the data collection system and mentioned how valuable that was in comparison to traditional forms of professional development. This one-to-one coaching
on data collection procedures allowed her to retain more information, ask specific
questions, and feel a sense of accountability from her. When asked to reflect on the most
valuable aspect of the peer coaching appointment on data collection and the review of
data collection procedures, Clara stated,

   Everything. Learning about data collection in a setting like this fits my learning style. It’s more personal. In large groups, you can only talk about a fraction of the specifics that helped me learn. This just suits me and my learning style best and we’re working through the specifics together.

Having the opportunity to participate in peer coaching in which her specific questions
were immediately answered allowed her implement what she had learned in her
classroom, seemingly increasing her self-efficacy.

   Clara also commented on the peer coaching program, and its ability to bring
teachers together to brainstorm alternatives for behavior reduction for her target student.
The field notes from I took from Clara’s appointment four highlighted her appreciation
for this program in terms of providing support for brainstorming strategies for behavior
reduction. Clara further commented on this in her final appointment by giving her peer
coach an update on how the behavior reduction strategy they discussed was going. Clara
stated,

   This has kept me accountable. In the past I would have throughout about things I
needed or wanted to work on, but now I see things throughout the day, and I think
I have to write that down to tell my peer coach.

Clara took accountability and become eager about strategies shared in peer coaching as
the process progressed. I annotated in Clara’s field notes for appointments two, three, and
four that she came to each appointment excited to show her peer coach something she
had implemented from the previous appointment’s feedback. After learning in a setting
that was supportive of her learning styles, Clara had increased efficacy. This increase in
efficacy allowed Clara to open up in appointments and comment on her progress as a teacher. She also shared other areas in which she had low efficacy asked her peer coach if she could come visit her classroom to observe her teach and implement other strategies. When asked how learning in a peer coaching setting differed from a traditional large-scale professional development opportunity, Clara stated,

Oh yeah, this [peer coaching] has improved my confidence. I think now that I understand the data [collection and analysis] I can de-escalate students and know what to do before they get to the level three [most intense] behaviors. That has been the biggest thing for me. Now I get it. I finally understand how behavior flows into each other. It’s nice to see the success and to know I am doing things right. My confidence has completely increased. I feel like I can take care of this. I can do anything!

Clara went on to explain how helpful this program has been because it allowed her to sit down with a peer who was a teacher in her community, promoting the idea of collegiality. This school district has special education coaches that are available for consultation, however, they are not teachers. Clara highlighted many times how nice it was to collaborate with another teacher to exchange ideas and opinions about classroom practices. Clara’s experiences with positive verbal persuasion and peer coaching influenced her ability to feel confident in herself so that she felt capable of making the changes she needed to make to improve her data collection and behavior reduction procedures.

**Clara’s summary.** Through the analysis of Clara’s data sources, she reported that the peer coaching program had a positive impact on her teaching practices for data collection and behavior reduction. When considering Clara’s experiences related to the first research question, it was evident that this program allowed her to learn in a suitable, personalized environment to refine her growth areas as a teacher. Clara, who was once
nervous and apprehensive to interact with challenging behaviors in the classroom, now feels capable and confident to collect data and make data informed decisions to reduce challenging behaviors within her classroom. When considering Clara’s experiences related to the second research question, it was clear that her participation in a peer coaching program provided a sense of accountability. Clara shared that she believes that having a positive relationship with a working peer in the field provides an opportunity to create professional relationships that allow educators to brainstorm, rethink the wheel, and provide a sense of reassurance that each educator is on the right path despite the challenges they face in the classroom.

*Elanor’s Case Profile*

At the time of this study, Elanor was a first-year teacher who entered the field immediately after graduating from a master’s program that provided her with foundational extensive classroom experiences over the course of two years. Elanor taught students who were classified as low-incidence students in the primary and intermediate grade bands. Elanor described herself in her initial questionnaire as fairly confident in data collection procedures but reported that she would like to learn more and further her knowledge in order to increase her feelings of self-efficacy on data collection procedures. Elanor reported in her initial interview that she currently did not have data collection procedures for any of her students and reported that she needed more exploration on the topic to make effective behavior intervention strategies. Elanor noted in her initial questionnaire that she had participated in some professional development concerning data collection and behavior intervention in large group settings. Elanor stated in her initial interview that she preferred small group learning experiences over large group trainings.
Elanor added in her initial questionnaire that she attended one training for crisis prevention hosted through her school, but the other offered training from the district focused on populations and students that were not reflective of her current caseload.

_Elanor’s changes in perceived self-efficacy._ The first research question in this study was: How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with proactive data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program? To explore Elanor’s description of her self-efficacy with data collection before and after the peer coaching, I reviewed her responses on the initial questionnaire and her initial interview transcript. Before participating in peer coaching, Elanor described herself on her initial questionnaire as somewhat confident with behavior data collection, but she indicated that she was lacking confidence in creating those systems from scratch. Because Elanor was a new teacher, she reported in her initial interview that she had no starting point. In Elanor’s initial interview, she stated,

> I would say my confidence in data collection is only moderate. I know how to collect data and the actual process of what to do but then taking data on all these kids with all their different goals and trying to train my paraprofessionals on doing it too and get them to do it the way I want them to do it. That’s where my confidence starts to falter. I tried to make a data sheet the other day and just stared at the computer for ten minutes. I had no idea where to start.

This response highlighted Elanor’s had low perceived self-efficacy and confidence in her own data collection and behavior reduction procedures. She also lacked confidence in leading her team of paraprofessionals to have effective procedures. Her lack of experience in these areas highlighted a sense of apprehension about implementing these skills in her classroom. After participating in the peer coaching, it was clear to me that Elanor had increased confidence. The field notes related to Elanor’s appointments three
and four highlighted that her dispositions towards data collection and behavior reduction changed. In these appointments, Elanor displayed confidence and came to each appointment eager to collaborate on ways to decrease the problem behaviors she was analyzing. In her final interview, Elanor stated,

I feel a lot more confident and capable than before. My school has asked someone to step up and be a representative at the school for our data, and I told them I would do it because now I feel familiar with what the district uses, and I enjoy doing it.

This response showed that Elanor had a change in self-efficacy. Her experiences with peer coaching and having an accountability partner allowed her to practice data collection, and relay what she learned to her team of paraprofessionals. As such, Elanor’s apprehension towards data collection was replaced with confidence in herself. Elanor also felt confident in her abilities to educate her peers and aid them in improving their data collection and behavior reduction strategies after participating in the program.

Before participating in her initial interview, Elanor showed apprehension with data collection when considering reflecting what she knew about data collection and taking that to work with a team of paraprofessionals and help them understand the same process. After participating in the program, Elanor reported in her final interview that she could confidently lead her team of paraprofessionals in the data collection process. Elanor stated, “I feel more confident than when we talked in the beginning especially when teaching other people how to take data and show them what to look for.” Elanor found confidence in herself, and she had improved perceived self-efficacy. Elanor felt confident enough in her own abilities that she felt capable enough to teach others the same processes she learned. Elanor stated in her final interview that participating in the modeling of these processes through participating in the peer coaching program allowed
her to retain the material and repeat it for others in her organization. Elanor further elaborated that she has already passed most of the responsibility for collecting data on this target student to his one-to-one paraprofessional. Before teaching her paraprofessionals, Elanor requested the PowerPoint used in this peer coaching program for personal use and training her paraprofessionals on this data collection system.

For Elanor, the peer coaching became a modeling experience so that she could teach and help her team of paraprofessionals further their knowledge on data collection procedures. Appropriately and adequately training paraprofessionals is an important task for special educators and creates a well-established routine for classroom procedures. As a new teacher, the peer coaching gave Elanor a toolkit that she could utilize moving forward.

*Elanor’s experiences with peer coaching.* The second research question in this study was: What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching focusing on proactive data collection and behavior reduction strategies? I analyzed Elanor’s field note protocols, final reflection questionnaire responses, and final interview responses to detail Elanor’s experiences with data collection and behavior reduction before and after the peer coaching. Elanor had positive experiences with the peer coaching, which gave her a sense of confidence when collecting behavior data in her classroom. This confidence was evidenced in her final interview transcripts and final written reflection. Elanor stated in her initial interview, “When they are doing behaviors I have seen before, I feel pretty confident, but when they have new behaviors that I have never interacted with, I am not really sure what to do and I don’t feel confident.”
This research question allowed me to explore Elanor’s experiences with data collection after participating in the peer coaching program. Elanor had reservations and apprehension about data collection before participating in the peer coaching program. Elanor stated in her initial questionnaire that she needed to learn more about data collection. She elaborated on this by explaining in her initial interview that she feels comfortable using data collection sheets but struggles to create them herself from scratch. However, in her final interview, she stated,

I feel comfortable with the whole experience [of data collection] now. I think now I am able to see exactly how much sensory input my student needed because I broke his behaviors down and looked at them each day. I think that shows that I am fairly confident and comfortable in recognizing what parts I might need to modify based on the data.

This response shows that Elanor’s experiences in peer coaching allowed her to increase her perceived self-efficacy in data collection procedures. Elanor’s final written reflection also showed evidence that she found benefits in the peer coaching program, especially considering her increased confidence in utilizing data to make behavior reduction strategies. Elanor wrote, “[Peer coaching] was a smooth process, and it was easy to understand. It only took me a couple days to implement what we talked about, and I am already using it in my class and am seeing a difference.” She shared that engaging in a program that was specific to her needs allowed Elanor to gain the knowledge she needed for her classroom, allowed her to feel a larger sense of self-efficacy concerning data collection, and modeled for her how to be a peer coach to her paraprofessionals so that she could establish an effective data collection system in her classroom. This sense of accountability also allowed her to feel capable to take on a leadership role as a data collection manager in her school.
The second research question also addressed Elanor’s experiences with behavior reduction strategies before and after the peer coaching. Elanor had positive experiences with peer coaching, especially through creating a collaborative relationship with me, a peer in her district. In appointment three, I annotated on the field note protocol that Elanor stated,

Learning all of this information in peer coaching instead of a big training is so much more valuable. In larger trainings I tend to tune out and become a space cadet. One-to-one learning is so much easier for me to focus, and it is so much more specific to me. I am able to ask questions and get an immediate answer.

Elanor continued to highlight benefits of peer coaching and commented on how beneficial they were to her learning in her final interview and her final written reflection. Elanor’s field note protocols from appointment four stated, “Talking about the specific and the very nitty gritty of what’s happening has been the most valuable part of this process for me.” This large school district in central Tennessee budgets for each quadrant in the district to have a special education coach. Teachers can contact the coach when problems arise in the classroom to visit the classroom, observe teaching practices, and help the teacher work through strategies as needed. Elanor expanded on these benefits when she discussed the difference in utilizing peer coaching for brainstorming behavior reduction strategies opposed to utilizing the district’s special education coaches. Elanor stated in her final interview,

The main difference between peer coaching and utilizing the coaches is that it’s probably been many years since the coaches were in charge of a classroom. They have helpful suggestions, but they are far removed from a lot of the realities of what it’s like now [to run a classroom]. If you don’t do something every day, you kind of forget what it’s like or how to do it. To me, that makes the feedback I received in the peer coaching feel more useful. I take this feedback seriously and know that you actually know what’s going on in my classroom and the advice really feels like it matters. It’s just different than popping in and seeing me teach quickly.
Elanor attributed her increases in better understanding the implementation of behavior reduction strategies to the individualized instruction she received in peer coaching, which aligned to her learning preferences. Elanor stated,

“It all goes back to the one-to-one instruction. I had a large training earlier today and I really couldn’t pay attention, so my time was wasted. I didn’t really learn anything but doing this [peer coaching] I actually learned things and I am able to implement them into my class.

Being able to visit with and learn from a peer coach in the district allowed Elanor to seek specific advice to make an immediate change for the behaviors in her classroom. This collegiality promoted her accountability.

*Elanor’s summary.* Elanor reported on her final interview and her written reflection that the peer coaching program created a positive impact on her teaching practices for data collection and behavior reduction. When considering Elanor’s experiences and connections to the first research question, it became evident to me that this program’s one-to-one delivery allowed her to retain more information and receive meaningful advice for classroom procedures. Elanor, who was once unsure and unfamiliar to create data collection systems for addressing challenging behaviors in the classroom, reported that she then felt capable and confident to collect data and make data-informed decisions to reduce challenging behaviors within her classroom. When considering Elanor’s responses to the second research question, it became clear to me that her participation in peer coaching provided her with useful advice that was meaningful because it came from a peer who worked in a similar situation. This experience also provided Elanor reassurance and a foundation to understand data collection for behavior management. Further, Elanor reported that she began to use peer coaching to work with
paraprofessionals, as she took on leadership roles in her setting. This process allowed her to feel confident and capable in her abilities as a teacher and as a mentor to others.

**Letti’s Case Profile**

Letti taught students in both primary and intermediate grade levels in a self-contained classroom. Letti described herself as moderately comfortable with data collection but did not have a current method of data collection procedures for her classroom. This was Letti’s first year working for the school district. She described herself as confident with behavior interventions, but that she needed further professional development opportunities to learn more on the topic. Although Letti had 17 years of experience as a special educator, this was her first year teaching in a self-contained classroom.

**Letti’s changes in perceived efficacy.** The first research question for this study was: How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with proactive data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program? To investigate Letti’s experiences with the peer coaching program focused on data collection for challenging behaviors, I analyzed her initial questionnaires and interview and compared them to her final interview and final questionnaire. Before participating in the peer coaching program, Letti indicated in her initial questionnaire that she did not have an existing form of data collection in her classroom. In her initial interview, she shared,

Some data collection that I’ve used in the past stresses me out to be honest with you. Am I focused on that [data collection] or should I be focusing on this [teaching and classroom management]? I feel comfortable taking the data when I know what to use.
Letti’s 17 years of experience provided her with a wide variety of skills but working in a new district and classroom with a variety of students left her feeling unsure of what data collection sources she should use. As such, Letti felt apprehensive about the data collection procedures in the district. Although Letti likely possessed the necessary knowledge and skills to produce an effective data collection system, she was unsure and unaware of the procedures, and she shared that she felt unconnected with peers in the district who she could have consulted had she felt more connected with them.

After participation in the peer coaching program, Letti seemed reassured that she had many skills related to data collection and that she was on the right track. The field notes from Letti’s third and fourth appointments detailed Letti’s changes in disposition. Letti came to both appointments excited to collaborate with her peer coach and eager to discuss the data analysis she had completed in the weeks leading up to the appointments. Letti appeared to benefit from having an accountability partner and enjoyed the sense of collegiality with her peer coach. Letti stated in her final interview,

> You know that imposter syndrome like I don’t know what I am doing or if I am doing enough? After this peer coaching, I feel better about what I am doing, and I feel like I have a better understanding of how to put it all together. It feels like I have a more organized concept of what it is that I need to be doing, but I also now feel good about what I was doing before.

For Letti, peer coaching gave her the opportunity to sit with a peer in a similar role, collaborate, brainstorm, and feel reassured about her data collection procedures. After participation, Letti was able to realize that she had the skills all along, but she needed to collaborate with a peer to reinstate her confidence in implementing best practices.

In analyzing Letti’s data sources before and after the peer coaching, it was clear to me that Letti found value in having a collaborative relationship with her peers. My field
notes for her third appointment indicated that she not only sought out advice about the programming material, but she also asked to meet with her peer coach to discuss other aspects of her classroom. This evidence further highlighted Letti’s appreciation for collegiality and accountability. I noted that she was highly appreciative of the advice provided through the peer coaching program and wanted to utilize that trusting relationship to ask about other aspects of her position. This response showed that Letti valued the trusting relationship of a peer coach within the district.

Letti described in her initial interview that she was new to the district and lacked peers and colleagues that she could turn to for the questions and concerns of her classroom. The lack of positive relationships with peers working in similar roles contributed to Letti’s apprehension about working in a self-contained classroom. She stated in her final questionnaire,

This process was a helpful experience to me as an experienced teacher and a new teacher in the district. Participation provided me with a boost of confidence and reinforced that yes, I do know what to do and how to do it but it also gave me a better way to organize my data collection.

Participating in peer coaching allowed Letti to relinquish some of her apprehension and feeling like an imposter, which was replaced with a stronger sense of perceived self-efficacy. Letti described that the largest contribution to her change in efficacy was the aspect of collegiality and accountability with a peer coach from her district.

*Letti’s experiences with peer coaching.* The second research question in this study was: What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching focusing on proactive data collection and behavior reduction strategies? To investigate Letti’s experiences in peer coaching surrounding data collection, I analyzed Letti’s final
interview, final reflection, and field note protocols. Letti had positive experiences surrounding her participation in the peer coaching program. In the field note protocols in appointment four, I detailed Letti’s positive experiences with the peer coaching process for her data collection procedures. Letti stated,

I feel like my overall understanding of behavior data is similar to what it was before. My confidence and my drive to do it appropriately now that I have had someone say hey that’s great or no think about this has increased.

With Letti’s increased confidence in collecting behavior data, she was able to better understand the processes of data collection and understand what to do inside her classroom to better reach her students. In Letti’s final interview she stated, “This has been beneficial. I feel so much better about what I actually knew, and I feel like I have more information going forward and solid example of how to set up a data sheet that is effective.” Letti shared that this increased understanding will allow her to repeat the process of creating and collecting data for the other students in her classroom.

When considering Letti’s experiences surrounding the peer coaching program for implementing behavior reduction strategies, she commented several times that the peer coaching process provided her a trusting relationship within the district. This was influential for her because she was a new teacher to the district. In Letti’s final interview, she stated,

The biggest benefit from the peer coaching program is that now, I have a connection. Being new to the district, I didn’t have anyone to ask how to do things. I feel like I had a pretty good tool set coming into this program, but now I feel like I had a support piece, someone who is also in the classroom and deals with behaviors on a daily basis. That’s comforting to me.

In Letti’s field note protocols, I highlighted that she would often reach out to me, her peer coach, about other components of school outside of the program, reinforcing that she
valued the connection and relationship she fostered through the program. Letti utilized her peer coach to answer questions for her, and she reach out about classroom procedures.

Letti also reported in her final written reflection that she highly valued the advice the peer coach gave in the program. The individualized feedback was helpful and influential for Letti’s ability to alter practices to eliminate apprehension and implement strategies to decrease behaviors. Letti shared that she utilized the feedback from her peer coach to make behavior reduction strategies in the classroom, Letti stated in her final questionnaire, “I will continue to utilize the data collection form from this study to track behaviors in my classroom to help me better understand the behavior and find ways to decrease them.” Letti trusted her conversations with her peer coach and used them to make decisions about behavior reduction strategies in the classroom because she valued the advice of a practicing teacher. She felt that seeking the advice of a teacher who experiences similar behaviors in their classroom could be beneficial to see how they have handled those behaviors and used similar strategies their classroom. Letti stated in her final interview,

My [special] education coach came to visit me the other day and her advice was good, but it wasn’t necessarily applicable to my situation. I feel like our conversations have been helpful in reinforcing me. They have been to the point, direct, and effective to my situation.

Having individualized peer coaching offered Letti, a veteran teacher, a chance to collaborate with professionals in similar roles to advance her knowledge.

Letti’s summary. Through the analysis of Letti’s data sources, Letti reported in both her final questionnaire and her final interview that the peer coaching had a positive
impact on her teaching practices for data collection and behavior reduction. When considering Letti’s experiences related to the first research question, it became evident to me that individualized instruction reinforced her current knowledge about data collection and provided her the opportunity to collaborate with a peer in a similar role to refine her practices and brainstorm best practices. This instruction seemed to mitigate her imposter syndrome and allowed her to see that she is a capable teacher with impressive skills, which increased her perceived self-efficacy. Letti, who was once discouraged and wary about entering a new school district and a new teaching role, felt capable and confident to collect data and make data informed decisions to reduce challenging behaviors within her classroom after the peer coaching. She also felt connected to her district and peers. When considering Letti’s responses related to the second research question, it became clear to me that her participation in a peer coaching program provided her with a meaningful relationship inside of her district that she could rely on for future collaboration. This relationship and someone to reassure her practices had a positive impact on Letti.

_Abigail’s Case Profile_

Abigail taught a moderate-to-severe population curriculum in a self-contained classroom for students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. These classrooms contain the students with the most significant intellectual disability classifications. Abigail described herself as feeling moderate about data collection in her initial questionnaire but described that she felt a rather low sense of self-efficacy when considering her ability to utilize collected data and make data-based decisions for behavior interventions. Abigail further commented on this in her initial interview. Abigail described that she felt she was already doing everything she knew how to do to reduce
the challenging behaviors in her classroom and displayed a great deal of apprehension surrounding her classroom and the behaviors she was interacting with. Abigail explained in both her initial questionnaire and her initial interview that she was not aware of any professional development opportunities that could increase her self-efficacy. She reported in her initial interview that attending simple, traditional forms of functional behavior assessment training and behavior intervention training, but she felt that she still needed to improve her understanding to best serve her students.

**Abigail’s perceived changes in efficacy.** The first research question in this study was: How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with proactive data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program? To investigate Abigail’s experiences with the peer coaching program surrounding increased efficacy with data collection procedures, I analyzed her initial interviews, her initial questionnaire, her final interview, and her final questionnaire. Before participating in the peer coaching program, Abigail reported that she had a moderate understanding of data collection on her initial questionnaire. She stated,

> My confidence in using data to create strategies for behavior reduction in my classroom is very low. I feel like with data, it’s hard to pick reduction strategies. In my classroom I already feel like I am doing everything I know of to help. I feel like I need additional help with interventions for problem behaviors.

In Abigail’s initial interview, she shared feelings of frustration, apprehension, and uncertainty surrounding her capabilities as a teacher. Abigail attributed these experiences with her low feelings of self-efficacy. Abigail described in her initial interview that she had many tools in her toolbelt but felt like she was at the end of her rope with data collection and behavior reduction. She stated,
This year I have been like do I know what to do, or do I know how to do this? There has been a lot of frustration and questioning and uncertainty about me. Of course I have strategies and I have things that I have done, and I know they work, but they don’t work for every child. So a lot of times I feel like I don’t always exactly know what to do immediately to make this behavior better.

Abigail reported in her initial interview that she was so frustrated about the difficulty of managing the behaviors in her classroom that she had not been taking data consistently.

In Abigail’s initial interview, she described factors that she believed impede her ability to take data concerning challenging behaviors and implement strategies. Abigail attributed her challenges on collecting appropriate data in her classroom to having enough time to collect it and having help collecting it from paraprofessionals. She stated,

When you’re in the thick of it, it’s hard to remember to take data sometimes. It’s difficult to train your paraprofessionals to help you take the data. I am not the best at teaching adults so sometimes it feels like it is easier to do it myself but then it gets put off because you don’t have the time always devoted to do it all yourself.

This response highlighted that before participation in the peer coaching program, Abigail was struggling to find the balance of managing a classroom, taking data on challenging behaviors, and delivering quality instruction.

Before the peer coaching program, Abigail was aware that the district was encouraging teachers to use an interval data recording system for problem behaviors, but she did not know how to set up the systems or organize the data. Without being explicitly taught how to use the system and create a data collection sheet from scratch, Abigail elected not to utilize these suggested procedures. This form of learning a new strategy did not align with Abigail’s learning preferences. As opposed to large trainings and seminars, Abigail preferred to learn in more targeted individualized settings. Abigail described in her first peer coaching appointment that she had seen the data collection sheet on
Schoology, an online database of resources for teachers in her district, but she indicated that she did not have the time or knowledge to create one for her students.

After participation in the peer coaching program, Abigail showed an increase in confidence towards her data collection and behavior reduction procedures. In her written reflection, Abigail stated, “I really have seen an increase in confidence. It helps to just sit down with someone [in a similar field] and know you are doing something right.” This highlighted Abigail’s appreciation for the collegiality and accountability offered through peer coaching. Abigail attributed her increased confidence to having a peer showing her exactly how to create and use the data collection sheet. In Abigail’s third peer coaching appointment she stated,

I think that this form of data collection gives you a better picture of what is happening with the behaviors. Learning it [the data collection sheet] with a peer is a little bit of a lower stake. No one wants to go into their district and admit to not using the form or ask questions on how to use it. Learning about it with a peer is lower stakes because you don’t have to feel as terrible in admitting you don’t exactly know what you’re doing or how to use it. My confidence in data collection has improved. I learned that I did have the skills, I just had a resurgence of confidence on I know how to do it, I just need to do it!

Abigail continued to comment on her increased confidence throughout her final interview, during which she was proud to share that she retained the information on how to utilize the data collection form and trained her paraprofessionals on the procedures.

Abigail stated,

I do think I have more confidence in terms of being able to do it [data collection] myself and being able to teach my paraprofessionals how to do it and how to use it. We had a meeting about it and are going to put it into effect with other students in our classroom. Just like we did [in the peer coaching], we broke down each student together and made a sheet that we thought reflected those students and their behaviors. The imposter syndrome is real! I think everyone feels it. This is now an area where now I feel like maybe I’m not such an imposter after all.
Through the analysis of Abigail’s experiences with data collection before and after participating in peer coaching, I identified that the peer coaching had a positive influence on her perceived self-efficacy for data collection procedures. An educator who once felt like she was unable to implement data collection procedures, Abigail could then organize and collect that data herself and train a team of paraprofessionals on the procedures.

*Abigail’s experiences with peer coaching.* The second research question in this study was: What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching focusing on proactive data collection and behavior reduction strategies? To investigate Abigail’s experiences related to the peer coaching program and her practices for data collection for making behavior reduction strategies, I reviewed the field notes I recorded, the initial interview transcript, the final interview transcript, and the final written reflection. On her initial questionnaire before participating in the peer coaching program, Abigail reported having extremely low efficacy in utilizing behavior data to make behavior reduction strategies. In her initial interview, Abigail stated,

> When you have students with challenging behaviors everyone looks to you like what do we do? I feel like I am not doing enough but at the same time it’s not like I am a magician who can make it all go away. Sometimes I feel like I am guessing when I am deciding what to do [for behavior reduction] and that is frustrating.

Abigail described that she felt the behaviors in her classroom were mainly derived from her students missing out on school routines and knowledge of norms due to the COVID-19 pandemic school closures. Because she serves primary grades, many of her students have never attended school in a physical classroom before. Abigail detailed throughout several appointments, indicated in field notes, that the new behaviors in her classroom
were a learning curve for her, and she was willing to consult any professionals in the field who could help her.

Abigail detailed the positive experiences she had through the peer coaching that aided in her increased self-efficacy for data collection in her final interview. She commented in her final interview about the program’s ability to provide teachers with accountability. Abigail felt the accountability of a peer coach largely contributed to her increased confidence in data collection. In her third appointment, Abigail stated,

I think that the accountability piece [of peer coaching] is actually more important than the content. Did I actually learn how to take the data? After we have talked, I learned that I actually did already kinda always know. You lose so much confidence in yourself when you don’t do these things and have behaviors, but then you talk to other teachers, and you learn it’s happening everywhere. I do know what I am doing and how to do this!

Abigail’s experiences show that peer coaching is not only beneficial to learning new content, but it is also beneficial to reassure teachers that they are on the right track. Abigail stated in her third appointment, “The accountability of this program made me take the data. As I took it, I got more familiar. I didn’t want to come to the appointments without data to discuss, so I took it.” Having the accountability and undivided time with a peer to discuss the data collected allows educators the time needed to practice and analyze critical need areas so they can begin to brainstorm behavior reduction strategies.

I designed the peer coaching program to focus on data collection so that educators could better analyze patterns to implement behavior reduction strategies. Abigail reported an increase in her confidence on her behavior reduction strategies in appointment four, according to the field notes I recorded. During this appointment, Abigail became excited about the interventions and ideas she was brainstorming with her peer coach, and she appeared to have more confidence in her capabilities as a special educator. In this
appointment, Abigail was able to accurately and confidently identify patterns that she discovered in her target student’s data. She stated areas that she knew she needed to provide additional supports to reduce challenging behaviors. In appointment four, Abigail shared,

The most valuable part of this appointment was the back-and-forth peer part of it, being able to have a sounding board, and bounce ideas [about behavior reduction] back and forth instead of just sitting somewhere and being talked at.

Like the other participants, Abigail valued the one-to-one feedback so that she could address her individual concerns and receive answers to her classroom specific questions. Peer coaching provided Abigail with a unique experience outside of the district’s supports that allowed her to collaborate with a professional in a similar role to brainstorm and plan appropriate interventions for reducing problem behaviors.

In her fourth peer coaching appointment, I recorded in the field notes that Abigail discussed that she found peer coaching encouraging for the circumstances that are arising in education today. I noted that in every appointment, she detailed the challenges of having a young group of learners that do not have adequate classroom experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic school closures. Due to these closures, her students did not have experience in schools to learn classroom expectations and behaviors. These challenges added to the existing challenges that present when educating students with severe disabilities. Abigail also commented in each appointment about how understaffed the special education program was at her school. This added additional stress to Abigail’s role because she had to compensate for the vacancies, in addition to fulfilling the expectations of her own role. Abigail stated in her fourth appointment,
Peer coaching definitely provides educators with extra encouragement and accountability which is more important now than it ever has been. I think peer coaching feels lower pressure [to talk through corrective teaching strategies] because you know it is just another teacher just like you. We are all just trying to do the very best we can. A lot of times when you are in the big trainings like everybody wants to talk about that one kid and how to help the behaviors of that one kid. Obviously, that is not an appropriate setting. Obviously, with 50 people in the class, you can’t do that. So I think [peer coaching] allows more targeted discussion about your problem student and where you need extra supports that doesn’t take away from anyone else or from what they need to be getting. I think it’s definitely beneficial. I like talking with other teachers.

This response showed that peer coaching provided Abigail with uninterrupted time to individually brainstorm with another professional on how to reduce problem behaviors within their classrooms.

Abigail commented in her final interview about how excited she was to implement one of the strategies that I shared with her, and she indicated she felt it would greatly improve the behaviors of her target student. In her final interview, Abigail stated, 

Through this peer coaching and looking at the data it really hit me that a lot of the times that we see elopement behaviors from my target student, we give him a reprimand right before. This helped me see I need to rethink ways I reprimand or prompt him. Instead of verbal, maybe I need to do visual. This program helped me break down those behaviors, so I know how to best fix them.

This response highlighted Abigail’s improved perceived self-efficacy related to behavior reduction strategies.

*Abigail’s summary.* Abigail, like many of the other study participants, was an experienced educator who seemed to experience imposter syndrome. The challenges that Abigail faced in the classroom daily allowed her to become defeated and apprehensive about her abilities as an educator. Through the peer coaching program, Abigail collaborated with a peer in a similar role about classroom procedures for data collection and behavior reduction. Collaborating with another professional allowed Abigail to
regain confidence in her abilities and motivate her to apply new procedures for behavior reduction and data collection.

When considering Abigail’s experiences related to the first research question, peer coaching allowed her to take her knowledge and apply it to the current procedures in the district to enhance her data collection practices. Peer coaching ensured Abigail that she did have effective data collection skills, and she was able to then train her paraprofessionals in effective data collection as a result. When considering her experiences related to the second research question, it became clear to me that her experiences in a peer coaching program also improved her data analysis procedures so that she could implement effective behavior reduction strategies. After peer coaching, Abigail was able to correctly collect and analyze data, identify areas of need for her target student, and brainstorm strategies to reduce those behaviors.

Cross-Case Analysis

I conducted a cross-case analysis to compare each participant’s experiences with peer coaching in this study. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. I uncovered five themes in this study. The findings imply that there is a positive connection between the one-to-one peer coaching program in this study and increased perceived self-efficacy for special educators working with students with challenging behaviors. Each participant detailed positive experiences participating in peer coaching. In the following sections, I detail the themes related to the
research questions for the study, themes related to the theoretical framework of this study, and emerging themes I identified in this study.

*Themes Related to the Research Questions*

The analysis of each participant’s responses related to the research questions revealed two themes. First, participants voiced that individualized feedback allowed them to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas in peer coaching. Second, participants voiced the impact of collegiality and accountability in peer coaching to promote productivity. Each participant related their experiences before and after participating in the peer coaching program and highlighted key differences being the individualized feedback rather than receiving whole group or high-stakes feedback. Each participant attributed having positive experiences participating in peer coaching with receiving timely, direct, targeted, and low-stakes feedback from their peer coach.

*The value of individualized feedback.* Individualized feedback allowed each teacher to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas. All four participants highlighted the benefit of receiving targeted feedback that was specific to their classrooms. This theme surfaced in three ways. First, some participants noted that the peer coach was able to answer questions quickly. Second, some participants noted that peer coaching was low stress. Third, some participants noted peer coaching allowed their individual concerns, rather than large-group concerns, to be addressed.

Each participant indicated how influential it was to receive timely and specific feedback during the peer coaching. This specific, personalized feedback allowed participants to feel reassured or reinstated confidence in their knowledge about data collection and behavior reduction. Abigail stated in her final interview,
Positive affirmations are my love language. If I don’t feel them, I get really discouraged. It is nice to sit with a teacher who is in your same role and walk away with those positive affirmations because I feel good about what I am learning.

Receiving specific feedback allowed each participant to feel good about their practices because they were experiencing the changes directly. Elanor stated in appointment four, “the most beneficial part of these appointments is coming and getting to talk about the specifics and getting to collaborate about what is going well and what isn’t going well to talk through changes.” Letti stated in her final interview, “I feel better about what I already knew because of the feedback and feel even better about going forward.” Peer coaching allowed educators to collaborate in a safe learning environment to practice, refine, and collaborate on current and future classroom procedures for effective classroom management. Abigail described on her written reflection, “the most valuable part of this program was the professional learning time dedicated to getting my specific questions answered quickly and effectively.” The specific feedback provided by the peer coach allowed the participants to implement classroom changes and seems to have increased their self-efficacy surrounding their practices.

Each of the four participants highlighted the positive difference of learning in an individual setting rather than learning in a whole group, such as a larger professional development setting. Clara, Letti, and Elanor stated that this setting was preferred because they could get their specific questions answered. They elaborated to say that in large group settings, it was more difficult to get your specific questions addressed because likely every person in attendance has questions. In a one-to-one setting, content and feedback and be individualized and specific.
Clara reported that she appreciated the support she received from her peer coach and wished she could have additional on-going support after completing participation in this study. Letti often would come to sessions with other questions about other content areas in her classroom. She elaborated to say that being new to the district, it was difficult to find out information and know who to ask questions about classroom procedures. She felt that being connected with a peer was helpful because it connected her to someone in the district who she could rely on to answer questions and give helpful tips. Elanor stated in her third appointment, “one to one is easier for me to focus. It is just more specifics, and I am able to ask questions.” Abigail stated in her fourth appointment that it is beneficial to be able to go back and forth, discussing the specifics of her data collection sheet with her peer coach. In summation the participants reported that learning in more intimate, private settings allowed them to learn information in a smaller setting, which allowed them to ask specific questions about material, collaborate, and follow up on newly learned material consistently with their peer coach.

*Collegiality and accountability fostering productivity.* When considering the second research question and the connections that each participant had before and after participating in the peer coaching focused on data collection and behavior reduction strategies, I uncovered one theme: Participants voiced the impact of collegiality and accountability in peer coaching to promote productivity. Collegiality refers to the cooperation of adults, while accountability refers to holding one another responsible. Collegiality and accountability among employees in similar positions promotes productivity because adults are motivated to excel. This peer coaching program allowed adults in a similar professional to collaborate while holding one another accountable.
This theme surfaced in four ways. First, some participants implied that the peer coaching experiences replaced previous negative experiences with positive experiences. Second, some participants explained that the peer coaching was explicit instruction. Third, some participants shared that even though the peer coaching was direct, it was friendly because it was from a peer. Fourth, some participants indicated the peer coaching encouraged collaboration for delegating classroom responsibilities.

Each participant shared the positive outcome of having a peer to collaborate, brainstorm, and ask questions to. The four participants in this study reported increased self-efficacy in their data collection and behavior reduction procedures before and after participating. Clara and Abigail both reported in their exit interviews that they were able to receive specific feedback and have an accountability partner to check in with and implement the feedback. They shared that this component allowed them to feel better about their classroom practices and procedures. Although not all participants reported that they enhanced their learning and understanding of data collection, all participants commented that the accountability increased or reinstated their confidence in data collection. All participants commented on the value of collaborating with a peer through the program to find alternative strategies for behavior reduction in the classroom.

Abigail stated in her final appointment that she was initially hesitant to elect to participate in the study due to being overwhelmed in the classroom and reluctant to work with another professional who might look down on her for not having an established data collection system. She shared that she was thankful that she participated in the study because she was able to collaborate with someone in a similar role and was reassured that she was on the right track. Clara mentioned in her final interview that the mentor and
mentee relationship in the one-to-one peer coaching gave her a sense of accountability. She shared that she was motivated to be more proactively engaged about her data collection because she knew that she would have uninterrupted time to talk over the components with her peer coach. Letti indicated in her written reflection that the peer coaching gave her a boost of confidence because it reinforced to her that she knew what she was doing. Letti utilized the peer coaching relationship to reach out outside of appointment sessions to schedule time with her peer coach to ask questions and brainstorm about other classroom aspects outside of behavior and data collection. The peer coaching program provided her with a peer in the district for collaboration. Letti elaborated on her written reflection that collaboration was helpful for her as a new teacher in the district. In summation, three of the participants in this study indicated that the peer coaching program helped them stay accountable and provided them with opportunities to collaborate.

Themes Related to the Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this study revealed that participants had past experiences that led to a sense of apprehension related to their abilities to lead an effective classroom. Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model highlights how a person’s past experiences contribute to a sense of self-efficacy. In each participant’s initial interview, they recounted their ability to collect data, manage a classroom, and intervene on behaviors. Each participant, through their own experiences, narrated times that revealed how their experiences gave them a sense of apprehension related to their abilities to lead an effective classroom. Table 8 includes participant responses related to the areas of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model.
### Table 8

**Evidence of Theoretical Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Performance Accomplishments</th>
<th>Vicarious Experience</th>
<th>Verbal Persuasion</th>
<th>Emotional Arousal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>“Until about four years ago, I was so confident that I could handle any behavior and then a student came my way that was an extreme challenge.”</td>
<td>“I finally understand now how all the aspects of behavior flow into each other. It is really cool to understand how to use [the data collection sheet].”</td>
<td>“This just suits me and my learning style best and we’re working through the specifics together.”</td>
<td>“When I think about that situation I have some PTSD.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elanor</td>
<td>“That’s where my confidence starts to falter. I tried to make a data sheet the other day and just stared at the computer for ten minutes. I had no idea where to start.”</td>
<td>“My school has asked someone to step up and be a representative at the school for our data, and I told them I would do it because now I feel familiar with what the district uses, and I enjoy doing it.”</td>
<td>“I take this feedback seriously and know that you actually know what’s going on in my classroom and the advice really feels like it matters. Its just different than popping in and seeing me teach quickly.”</td>
<td>“I am not really sure what to do and I don’t feel confident.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letti</td>
<td>“Being new to the district, I didn’t have anyone to ask how to do things.”</td>
<td>“It feels like I have a more organized concept of what it is that I need to be doing, but I also now feel good about what I was doing before.”</td>
<td>“I feel like our conversations have been helpful in reinforcing me. They have been to the point, direct, and effective to my situation.”</td>
<td>“Some data collection that I’ve used in the past stresses me out to be honest with you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>“In my classroom I already feel like I am doing everything I know of to help.”</td>
<td>“The imposter syndrome is real! I think everyone feels it. This is now an area where now I feel like maybe I’m not such an imposter after all.”</td>
<td>“I really have seen an increase in confidence. It helps to just sit down with someone [in a similar field] and know you are doing something right.”</td>
<td>“There has been a lot of frustration and questioning and uncertainty about me.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Performance accomplishments. The analysis of the data sources in this study showed that each participant had a certain degree of apprehension about their data collection and behavior reduction strategies before participating in the program. Clara referenced in her initial interview and throughout several of the appointments that she was initially apprehensive about behavior reduction strategies due to the experiences she had with a highly aggressive student. This experience tied negative feelings to data collection and behavior reduction, which affected Clara’s performance accomplishments. Letti mentioned in her initial interview that she had apprehension regarding her practices because of a negative experience she had with an administrator. The feedback she received from an administrator in a previous district caused her to feel unsupported and incapable of effectively intervening on student behaviors. Abigail stated in her final interview that she was apprehensive to participate in the study at first, because it can be difficult to admit to peers and colleagues that you are not doing the things you should be doing in the classroom to collect data and intervene on behaviors. She elaborated that peer coaching was helpful because it provided her with time with a peer to talk through the specifics and reassured her that she was on the right track. Elanor explained that the peer coaching program provided her with the opportunity to learn how to break down the specifics so that she could repeat the process with her paraprofessionals. As a newer teacher in the district, Elanor shared in her initial interview that this was a challenge she was currently trying to overcome. Elanor struggled to find ways to teach her paraprofessionals. She said that receiving modeling from a peer on the process was beneficial for her. Each of these examples describes how each teacher overcame varying degrees of apprehension about best practices, data collection, and behavior management.
based on their experiences in the peer coaching program. Each educator, in their own way had prior experiences that altered their feelings of efficacy and their performance accomplishments.

*Vicarious experience.* Each participant took part in this program to provide them with experiences that was geared to improve overall feelings of self-efficacy. Each participant’s experiences were designed to target reported feelings and struggles within their unique classroom. Bandura (1977) described that people develop higher or lower feelings of self-efficacy vicariously through other people’s performance. By sharing experiences and collaborating together, participants were able to work with their peer coach and work through strategies by comparing and contrasting together what strategies were working, what strategies had not been tried, and model how to implement strategies that could effectively intervene on challenging behaviors. Participants used phrases such as, “I also now feel good about what I was doing,” “I am not such an imposter after all,” and “I finally understand.” This theoretical framework further indicated that a person can watch another person perform or work through a problem or task, and compare their own experiences for reflective thinking and, ultimately, alter their practices to model proven strategies from their peer coach. In this program, mentee teachers were able to listen to suggested strategies and receive coaching and feedback in a low-stakes environment that supported them being able to reflect and alter practices for improving their classrooms.

*Verbal persuasion.* Each participant received specifically tailored feedback that was unique to their own classrooms and experiences. Through this feedback, each participant also received modeling and coaching for implementing these strategies into
their classrooms. The one-to-one peer coaching program directly aligns with the verbal persuasion aspect of the model. Participants stated, “This type of professional development suits my learning style,” “I take this feedback seriously,” and “I have seen an increase in confidence.” This aspect of the model aligns with coaching and feedback. The modeling aspects of this program, paired with the coaching and feedback of tailored instruction for their target student, created positive experiences for participants in which they felt confident and capable to update their practices. They seemed to have improved self-efficacy in their data collection because they reported they could analyze the data and make data-driven decisions for behavior reduction.

*Emotional arousal.* The participants in this study, having reported a sense of low efficacy at the start of the study, associated their poor evaluations, negative experiences in the classroom, and experiences with inadequate interventions for challenging behaviors with perceived inability to effectively educate their students. These experiences provided each participant with an overwhelming feeling of apprehension surrounding their ability to effectively collect data on problem behaviors within the classroom and impacted her ability to effectively intervene on those behaviors. They used phrases such as “I’m not sure what to do and I do not feel confident” and “data collection stresses me out”. However, after the participation peer coaching, all participants in this study reported an increase in their self-efficacy. The biggest contribution to their increase in self-efficacy was their ability to collaborate with a peer in a similar profession. Collaborating with a peer allowed each participant to feel emotionally supported in implementing new ideas for new practices.
Other Emerging Themes

I identified two emerging themes in this study. First, participants felt that peer coaching was aligned to their learning preferences, allowing them to get the most out of the personalized experience. Second, some participants were able to overcome feelings of imposter syndrome when participating in peer coaching. I detail these themes in the following sections.

Learning preferences. Every participant also alluded to the benefits of learning in an environment that was personalized and supportive of their learning preferences. This study showed the potential benefits of designing professional developments that best suit learning preferences, especially when the learning preference is learning in a smaller group. Clara stated in her final interview that she enjoyed learning in a one-to-one setting because she learns best by talking with her peer coach. She stated that in a more traditional large group setting, she would not have had the opportunity to do that. Elanor stated that in large group settings, she tends to “tune out” and become overwhelmed with the information. She said that smaller group settings are more beneficial for her learning because she is able to engage more with the content and ask her specific questions. Letti stated in her final interview, “I think [peer coaching is] more organized and inclusive for my assistance instead of me learning it all on my own on the side.” Abigail said in her final interview that her peer coach showed her how to set up the data sheet for a particular student. She was able to see the process unfold with her peer coach, and then was able to repeat that with her own team afterwards. She mentioned how doing the same process in a larger setting would have been difficult because every person in attendance
would want their specific questions answered, and there just is not time to repeat that process and make it as specific as it could be in a smaller setting.

**Imposter syndrome.** Letti and Abigail both mentioned imposter syndrome was a factor in their feelings of apprehension and low self-efficacy surrounding their data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Collaborating with a peer in a similar role allowed participants in this study to reduce feelings of defeat and replace them with confidence. Letti said in her final interview that she did not know at first if she was doing a good enough job. She mentioned that after participating in the peer coaching program, she shared that she felt better about what doing at the time of the study and about what she knew before too. Participating in the peer coaching program and collaborating with a peer that is in a similar field allowed her feelings of defeat and apprehension to be replaced with confidence in her practices. Abigail stated in her final interview that she felt reassured after participating in the peer coaching program that she was on the right track. Collaborating with a peer in a similar role, who was facing similar challenges allowed her to collaborate and realize that the challenges she was facing in the classroom were not a result of her teaching practices. Instead, they were related to issues that were not directly tied to her and were bigger issues in her district and the staffing crisis in education. In summation, both Abigail and Letti felt a sense of reinstated confidence in their practices surrounding data collection and behavior reduction after participating in the peer coaching program.

**Discussion**

This study focused on analyzing participants’ experiences with peer coaching programs in relation to their data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Few
Previous studies have analyzed this topic with this population of educators. Many previous studies have used quantitative approaches to analyze a large pool of participants to analyze statistical results for before and after participating in a peer coaching program. Other studies analyzing peer coaching in education included higher education instructors, teachers who teach older populations of students, and educators who serve in general education (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Rice et al., 2020). These various projects form the foundations for the following discussion. I uncovered five key findings in this study. The findings for this study were as follows:

- Participants voiced that individualized feedback allows each teacher to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas in peer coaching.
- Participants voiced the impact of collegiality and accountability in peer coaching to promote productivity.
- Participants had past experiences that led to a sense of apprehension related to their abilities to lead an effective classroom.
- Participants felt that peer coaching was aligned to their learning preferences, allowing them to get the most out of the personalized experience.
- Some participants were able to overcome feelings of imposter syndrome when participating in peer coaching.

I discuss these five findings in the following sections.

*Value of individualized feedback.* Participants voiced that individualized feedback allows each teacher to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas in peer coaching. Participants stated that the vicarious experiences in this peer coaching program created success in their classrooms because of the collaboration and modeling they received from their mentor teachers. Individualized feedback allows each teacher to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas. This
finding is similar to other findings because it supports the idea that individualized feedback connects theory to practice with a mentor (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Darling Hammond et al. (2017) argued that 21st century professional development should be content-focused, incorporate active learning through adult learning strategies, include collaboration within job-embedded contexts, use modeling for effective practice, provide coaching and ongoing expert support, offer opportunities for feedback and reflection, and last for sustained durations for frequent occurrences. The concept of constructive criticism has been around for decades, and is driven to provide educators with reinforcement areas so they feel motivated to refine other practices (Hamid & Mahmood, 2010). The peer coaching program in this study was content-focused for each participant and included dedicated time to learn a data collection system designed for their target student. They also had time dedicated with a peer to sort through problems that were surfacing with their problem student, and brainstorm how to implement corrective, behavior-reducing strategies (Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Dellapenna, 2017). As part of the peer coaching program, I incorporated active, collaborative learning and held interviews before and after the peer coaching. I, as the peer coach, modeled concepts to the participants so that they could repeat them within their own contexts. In each appointment, I provided participants with ongoing coaching and support and opportunities to reflect on their practice.

**Collegiality and accountability.** Participants voiced the impact of collegiality and accountability in peer coaching to promote productivity. Participants were able to see performance accomplishments through increased knowledge of effective data collection, analysis, and intervention planning alongside their peer coach. Prior research indicated
that peer coaching should be collaborative (Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Dellapenna, 2017; Miller, 2011). The participants in this study indicated that collaboration was the most favorable and appreciated aspect of the peer coaching. Each participant in this study highlighted that the collaboration with a peer motivated them and held them accountable in adapting the data collection system. These findings are similar to existing research surrounding the impacts of peer coaching (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Jones, 2020; Miller, 2011). Brown (2016) found that peer coaching increases the likelihood that teachers will adopt new teaching practices. When educators trust who is giving them feedback and value their opinion, they are more likely to want to implement the suggestions. The participants in this study added to this by claiming they felt that the peer coaching experience provided a low stakes opportunity to learn and practice new information, as opposed to feeling the pressures of learning from or being corrected by an official district representative. Brown (2016) described peer coaching as a form of professional development, stating, “peer coaching provided dedicated time for teachers to meet and analyze their work supports teachers in reflecting on and refining their practice” (p. 15). This study added to these claims by highlighting the positive lived experiences gained from participating in a peer coaching program.

The findings of this study indicate that peer coaching provides struggling educators with a collaborative relationship with a peer in a similar role that they can brainstorm with to refine and perfect teaching strategies, specifically for data collection and behavior reduction. This finding is in line with previous studies indicating that peer coaching acts as a collaborative vessel to improve educator learning and professional
development through interacting with a peer (Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Jao, 2013; Parker et al., 2015; Rice et al., 2020; Steinberg & Watkins, 2021).

**Apprehension.** Participants had past experiences that led to a sense of apprehension related to their abilities to lead an effective classroom. Participants had an increase in self-efficacy after participating in the peer coaching program, which connected to their emotional arousal. This study aimed to aid special educators in finding behavior reduction strategies for their classrooms. This study revealed that some educators struggle to find the best strategies for behavior reduction in professional developments because they do not have undivided time to ask specific questions about their own students. This contributed to current research surrounding behavior management (Barbetta et al., 2005; Flower et al., 2016). Flower et al. (2016) claimed that teachers are underprepared for the behaviors that their students present and investigated teacher preparation. They concluded that teachers need better preparation programs to address teaching students with challenging behaviors. The participants in this study reinforced those claims by describing their positive experiences surrounding learning behavior management strategies through peer coaching opportunities. This lack of professional development contributes to an educator’s feelings of self-efficacy because they often feel like they have no other strategies and feel hopeless. Ross (2016) highlighted the connection between educator efficacy and student performance with behavior reduction. Ross (2016) explained that an educator’s sense of self-efficacy correlates to an educator’s instructional practices. The participants in this study, having reported a sense of low efficacy, associated their poor evaluations, negative experiences in the classroom, and experiences with inadequate interventions for challenging
behaviors with perceived inability to effectively educate their students. These experiences provided each participant with an overwhelming feeling of apprehension surrounding their ability to effectively collect data on problem behaviors within the classroom and impacted her ability to effectively intervene on those behaviors.

Learning preferences. Participants felt that peer coaching was aligned to their learning preferences, allowing them to get the most out of the personalized experience. Research established a debate on using the term learning preferences rather than learning styles (Stanny, 2021). Stanny (2021) stated that one source of the misconception is based on personal preferences with activities. When people prefer to learn in a smaller group as opposed to a larger group, it becomes their learning preference and not their learning style. Stanny (2021) further stated that students learn various content and skills best learned when teachers use specific modalities to interact with the content that aligns to student learning preferences.

This study aimed to explore special educators’ experiences with peer coaching in relation to data collection procedures. This study also revealed that special educators struggle to balance collecting data, finding patterns in their data, and finding professional developments aligned to the problems that are relevant to their populations, especially for educators working with students in the low-incidence population. The participants of this study highlighted the benefits in working through a one-to-one setting on identifying elements of their classroom structure and environment that could be refined to best suit their students. This direct coaching was more beneficial than a traditional professional development setting because it was meaningful and relevant to the participant’s classroom because they had uninterrupted time to learn, refine, and collaborate about
their own classroom procedures. Brown (2016) stated, “coaching guides the transfer of professional learning from workshop sessions to more concrete applications that are inherently present in the classroom. The assistance is best provided by support that is directly focused on a teacher’s practice” (p. 15). The specific feedback provided by this peer coaching program allowed the participants to implement direct changes and increase their feelings of efficacy surrounding their practices.

**Imposter syndrome.** Two participants in this study were able to overcome feelings of imposter syndrome when participating in peer coaching. The feelings of imposter syndrome stem from low emotional arousal and self-perception. LaPalme et al. (2022) stated that imposter syndrome is a widespread psychological phenomenon in education. LaPalme et al. (2022) indicated that imposter syndrome causes educators to feel like others overestimated their capabilities and feel depleted and stressed. Both participants, Letti and Abigail, discussed their feelings of imposter syndrome in their final interviews. They both stated that after participating in the peer coaching program, they felt better about what they learned but felt refreshed about the skills they had before participating. LePalme et al. (2022) stated that imposter syndrome is extremely prevalent for educators in the K-12 population and mentioned the importance of emotional coping as a strategy to eliminate these feelings. Both Abigail and Letti mentioned talking with an educator in a similar field aided their feelings of apprehension about their feelings. This connects with LePalme’s et al. (2022) argument that coping eliminates feelings of imposter syndrome. For Letti and Abigail, talking with a peer in the field and discussing the challenges they were facing in the classroom provided them with an opportunity to vent their emotions and find coping strategies to alleviate their feelings of imposter
syndrome. LePalme et al. (2022) suggested that future research should seek avenues that reduce feelings of imposter syndrome. After exploring Abigail and Letti’s feelings of increased confidence after participating in this peer coaching program, further research could expand on this and further explore peer coaching’s connections to reducing feelings of imposter syndrome in other populations and settings.

**Implications and Recommendations**

In this section, I provide the implications of the study themes and related recommendations. I organize these implications and recommendations by stakeholder groups. The stakeholders for this study include special educators, special education administrators, and district-level directors.

**Special Educators**

This study has implications for special educators, particular at the elementary level. While engaging in the peer coaching programs, educators received direct instruction, feedback, and coaching to improve their current practices while providing suggestions for classroom practices. These additional supports aimed to provide educators with the opportunity to implement behavior reduction strategies into everyday routines (Moore et al., 2018; Ruble et al., 2018). Central to the participants’ experiences in the program was the collaboration sustained through the relationship (Brown, 2016), accountability (Miller 2011), reflective practice through weekly appointments and coaching (Jao, 2013), and increased confidence through low-stake feedback from a peer in the field (Steinberg & Watkins, 2021). The peer coaching supports allowed educators to refine their practices, which increased their confidence in data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Peer coaching provided a collaborative relationship where
participants could brainstorm with a similar aged peer (Brown, 2016). Though the participants in this study represent a small illustration of the potential impact of peer coaching, their experiences paired with the existing literature indicate that participating in a peer coaching program can increase confidence in data collection and behavior reduction strategies for students with challenging behaviors. Educators should seek out and sign up for peer coaching programs, especially if they have low self-efficacy related to data collection and behavior reduction strategies.

One direction for further research on this topic includes replicating the study on a larger scale with more peer interaction. I conducted this study using a video conferencing system. In the future, a similar study could implement classroom observations to provide additional low-stakes feedback. I limited this study to elementary special educators. Further research could engage educators in other districts and other grade levels. Suggestions for further research studies include replicating this study with other educators to determine the impact of peer coaching across multiple settings. This may provide more insight into the impact of peer coaching.

*Special Education Administrators and District-Level Directors*

This study has implications for special education administrators and district-level directors. These administrators and directors are tasked with providing supports to special educators, plan professional development opportunities to provide teachers with, and push into struggling classrooms when needed for additional supports. Therefore, it is important to encourage the administrators to explore peer coaching as a strategy to aid struggling teachers. Administrators and directors could organize a peer coaching support system within the district to aid struggling teachers and provide more professional
development opportunities like these that are more aligned to educator learning preferences.

Special education administrators and district-level directors should design and implement peer coaching programs for first-year educators throughout their first year of teaching to provide additional support for those entering the field. First-year teacher support is needed so that any educator entering the district is prepared with the knowledge needed to best serve this population. This district promotes a new teacher academy to train, inform, and prepare newly hired employees. In addition, the district should assign new hires a mentor teacher in the district who serves a similar population. I recommend that the administrators and district-level directors further explore educator learning preferences in their district and align professional development opportunities to those preferences to allow educators to feel more supported and provide them with a valuable learning experience. Another significant implication resulting from this study and existing literature indicates that school districts should investigate low educator efficacy and more intimate forms of professional development opportunities to increase understanding of content knowledge (Brennan, 2017).

Summary and Conclusion

Districts and schools need to invest in special educators so that they feel confident in the classroom and knowledgeable about best practices for data collection and behavior reduction. Research shows that self-efficacy provides feedback and learning opportunities to educators and mitigates apprehension and lack of confidence, replacing those feelings with confidence and collaboration (Dellapenna, 2017; Goker, 2006). Moreover, districts must provide alternative forms of professional development that better prepares and
supports special educators (Brennan, 2017). Peer coaching serves as a unique and collaborative approach to professional development that provides content knowledge and connections for skill enhancement (Parker et al., 2008). The perceptions of the participants in this study align with existing literature surrounding peer coaching and increased self-efficacy.

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. This study had five key findings. First, participants voiced that individualized feedback allows each teacher to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas in peer coaching. Second, participants voiced the impact of collegiality and accountability in peer coaching to promote productivity. Third, participants had past experiences that led to a sense of apprehension related to their abilities to lead an effective classroom. Fourth, participants felt that peer coaching was aligned to their learning preferences, allowing them to get the most out of the personalized experience. Fifth, some participants were able to overcome feelings of imposter syndrome when participating in peer coaching.

The essential stakeholders for this study include special educators and special education administrators and district-level directors. The biggest impact for this study will benefit special educators. Providing them with personalized coaching experiences allowed the participants in this study to feel better supported to work with students with significant challenges. This study benefits administrators and district-level directors because it informs areas of growth for future programming and professional development.
planning. Exploring ways to reach teachers with feelings of low self-efficacy, investing in their continued education, and aiding them in improving practices creates opportunities for district-level administrators to discover how they can retain, assist, and motivate teachers for long term success in the district.
CHAPTER FOUR

Executive Summary and Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

In this study, I explored the experiences of special educators in a peer coaching program. In the previous chapter, I explained the findings, implications, and recommendations of this study centered around existing literature and the data gathered through the questionnaires, interviews, field notes, and written reflections of the participants from a central district in Tennessee. While districts throughout the nation currently face an educator shortage, some districts are beginning to further invest in the mental health of their educators as a strategy to increase educator efficacy and educator retention (Billingsley, 1993; Ekornes, 2017; Gray et al., 2017). Special educators working with students with challenging behaviors face the challenges of a typical educator, in addition to added stresses for finding best practice strategies for reaching students with added challenges. While districts continue to face this issue, they need to implement opportunities to retain educators and increase their efficacy in the classroom. By investing in educator efficacy through the implementation of peer coaching programs, districts will prepare educators with 21st century skills and practices while providing the opportunity to collaborate with a peer inside of the district in a similar role and receive low-stakes feedback to improve classroom practices.

Prior research has indicated that implementing peer coaching programs for educators identifying with low self-efficacy provides low-risk, specific feedback as a professional development opportunity (Dellapenna, 2017), a sense of accountability
(Steinberg & Watkins, 2021), and a relationship with a peer to brainstorm best practices for classroom procedures (Miller, 2011). Implementing peer coaching programs engages the four components of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model. Through questionnaires, interviews, field notes, and written reflections, I identified what experiences participants had while participating in a peer coaching program. The research questions for this study were:

1. How do special educators describe their self-efficacy with behavior data collection before and after participation in a one-to-one peer coaching program?

2. What are the experiences of special educators with one-to-one peer coaching that focused specifically on behavior data collection and behavior reduction strategies?

The findings of this study provide evidence that there is a need for more peer coaching opportunities within school districts to provide elementary special educators with access to low-stakes feedback on data collection and behavior reduction strategies in peer coaching settings.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

I conducted a multiple case study of four special educators from a large central district in Tennessee to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching. Each participant was representative of a different quadrant in the district. I collected data over a five-week peer coaching program. I used an initial questionnaire, and an initial interview to collect data before the peer coaching. After the initial interview, I provided five weekly peer coaching appointments. I recorded field notes after each appointment to annotate prudent
information from the appointing, including session activities, session notes, disposition notes, participant comments, participant concerns, and participant questions. I also collected a final interview, and a final written reflection through Qualtrics.

The data analysis aligned with Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model. Using an open coding process, I analyzed each data source to uncover the themes related to the study’s research questions and related to the theoretical framework. I explored and uncovered participants’ experiences with peer coaching focused on data collection and behavior reduction strategies. In the next section, I summarize the key findings derived from the data analysis.

Summary of Key Findings

This study had five key findings. First, participants voiced that individualized feedback allows each teacher to receive constructive criticism tailored to individual growth areas in peer coaching. This finding was closely connected to the vicarious experiences highlighted in Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model. Second, participants voiced the impact of collegiality and accountability in peer coaching to promote productivity. This finding related to performance accomplishments highlighted in Bandura’s model. The peer coach in this study utilized modeling to foster mentee teachers to self-reflect and alter their performance. Third, participants had past experiences that led to a sense of apprehension related to their abilities to lead an effective classroom. These feelings of apprehension target the emotional arousal highlighted in Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model. Fourth, participants felt that peer coaching was aligned to their learning preferences, allowing them to get the most out of the personalized experience. Fifth, some participants were able to overcome
feelings of imposter syndrome when participating in peer coaching.

Peer coaching provides low-stakes feedback to educators while connecting them with a peer in the district. The exposure of peer coaching to educators who identify with low self-efficacy proved to be incredibly beneficial in helping educators improve data collection procedures and brainstorm behavior reduction strategies. Participants entered the program with reported low self-efficacy, eager to improve their data collection and behavior reduction procedures for a target student in their classroom. This mitigated feelings of apprehension and imposter syndrome. By the end of the program, participants articulated having improved efficacy and confidence in their data collection procedures. All participants reported that they either had improved self-efficacy in their ability to implement behavior reeducation strategies or had reinstated confidence in their existing abilities after their participation in the study. All participants shared that they valued the one-to-one individualized feedback and the opportunity to learn with their preferred learning preferences.

The key findings of my study illustrate the power of peer coaching in helping special educators improve their self-efficacy related to data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Additionally, the participants authenticated the notion that peer coaching serves as a valuable alternative to traditional professional development opportunities. Data analysis provided evidence that the value of peer coaching as professional development for elementary special educators who previously reported having low self-efficacy. Participants noted how the peer coaching program aided them in learning about new procedures and strategies while providing them with a relationship in the district for collaboration and brainstorming.
Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study may prompt an interdisciplinary approach for better exploring the relationships between peer coaching and special education. I recommend that peer coaching should be considered as a form of professional development for special educators who previously reported having low self-efficacy in data collection and behavior reduction strategies. Rather than providing traditional, large-scale professional development on broad topics, districts should consider providing peer coaching opportunities so that special educators can receive individualized education on content that is relevant to their classrooms.

In light of this research, I offer two recommendations for further research. First, researchers could explore this topic in other grade bands. This study was exclusive to elementary special educators. This study could be replicated with other educators from other grade levels to further explore the benefits of peer coaching for self-efficacy on data collection and behavior reduction. Second, researchers could explore larger sample sizes to generalize the findings. Possible areas to expand for further research include exploring this topic with both general and special educator self-efficacy on a larger scale. I recommend duplicating the study on a larger scale with more peer interaction through in person observations and collaborations. Researchers could engage educators in other districts and other grade levels. Suggestions for further research studies include replicating this study with other educators to determine the impact of peer coaching across multiple settings. This may provide more insight into the impact of peer coaching. Educators should seek out and sign up for peer coaching programs, especially if they have low self-efficacy related to data collection and behavior reduction strategies.
Findings Distribution Proposal

There are three objectives for distributing the findings of this study. The first objective is to disseminate the final findings of the study to each participating educator and their supervising principals. I will present the findings using a PowerPoint presentation. I will encourage each person to book conference time with me through Microsoft Outlook if they have questions about the findings. The second objective is to schedule a meeting with the district’s special education director, and the special education designees for each grade band at the district’s conferencing board room located at the district hub. I will present the findings through a PowerPoint presentation and will additionally make a brochure to hand out for every person in attendance. The third objective is to schedule a meeting with the special education director to meet and discuss further implementing peer coaching in the district.

Target Audience

The target audience for this study includes two groups. The first group includes the special educators in the district. I am motivated to target this audience because, as their peer, I know they have a need for more targeted, specific, and valuable professional development opportunities. Since this study builds upon the work they do daily and provides a connection towards improving feelings of low self-efficacy, I hope to continue the discussion on how to expand the scope of special education. I will collaborate with the directors to see about presenting on professional development days to other educators in the field and connect them with their peers in the district to expand on this study.
The next audience group for this study includes the special education directors and grade-level representatives. Because this study focused on special educators, I want to connect with the directors and grade-level representatives to demonstrate how they can further implement peer coaching to other educators in the district who are having low self-efficacy. I also want to discuss the possibility of implementing a peer coaching program for new educators entering the district so that they can create a solid foundation in the district and feel a high sense of efficacy in their first few years of teaching. These directors have the influence and authority to make departmental and organizational changes, so they are the most influential stakeholder to target. Presenting at professional conferences and publishing in academic journals will help gain their attention.

Proposed Distribution Method and Venue

I am excited to present these findings to the directors in this district because I hope this research inspires other scholars to further investigate this topic. I hope that the findings distributed from this study motivates the directors to explore the low self-efficacy of educators in their district so that they can target those teachers and provide additional supports. The venue for distributing these findings includes various professional conferences and academic journals that focus on special education and self-efficacy. At conferences where I chose to share a presentation, I will share my study findings and provide time throughout the presentation for attendants to collaborate and connect. Should I have the opportunity to present a poster at a conference, such as the Council for Exceptional Children Convention, I will design a poster that includes all components of the study. I will speak with attendees and provide them with a brochure.
about my study. The brochure will include related literature, quotes from participants, and the findings of the study.

Conclusion

Special educators often struggle with low self-efficacy due to the many responsibilities that encompass their role. Peer coaching works to address these low feelings of self-efficacy by providing participants with direct instruction, feedback, and a meaningful relationship (Brennan, 2017; Steinberg & Watkins, 2021). Failing to address special educator efficacy results in the manifestation of student behaviors which impact instruction (Cumming et al., 2021; Mindes, 2017). Peer coaching utilizing the components of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy judgment model ensures that educators receive supports that replace negative, prior experiences with positive, physiological feedback and content knowledge (Dellapenna, 2017; Jones, 2020). By implementing peer coaching as professional development, educators can refine their practices and make connections.

This study demonstrated how peer coaching provides a meaningful relationship, and how that relationship allows educators to comfortably receive feedback to refine practices, learn new information, and increase their self-efficacy. The findings of this study contribute to existing literature by exploring peer coaching with special educators. In comparing participants’ experiences before participating in the peer coaching program, participants became more confident in their data collection procedures and felt more capable implementing behavior reduction strategies. Therefore, as supported by the findings from this study and existing literature, including peer coaching as a professional
development opportunity in the district could increase their self-efficacy and capability as a teacher.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Participant Consent Form

Baylor University
EdD Organizational Leadership and Change
Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Exploring the Role of Self Efficacy on Effective Data Collection for Behavior Reduction: A Multiple Case Study of Elementary Special Educators

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sarah Willmore and Ryann Shelton

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
You are invited to be part of a research study. This consent form will help you choose whether or not to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this consent form.

Important Information about this Research Study
The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching.

- In order to participate, you must be an elementary special educator in the participating district who has between 1–25 years of teaching experience.
- If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in two interviews and a five weeklong peer coaching program by meeting weekly over a video conferencing platform.
- Risks or discomforts from this research include There are no known risks to participating in this research.
- The possible benefits of this study include increased self-efficacy and targeted, individual professional development.
- Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

More detailed information may be described later in this form. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research study.
Why is this study being done?
The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the self-efficacy of special educators with behavior data collection and to examine their experiences with one-to-one peer coaching focusing on behavior data collection and the implementation of behavior reduction strategies.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out an initial questionnaire enrolling into the pool of participants. If selected, you will then participate in an initial interview. You will meet with the researcher for weekly for interventions and professional developments. Then you will meet for a final interview.

How long will I be in this study and how many people will be in the study?
Participation in this study will last 5 weeks (4 weeks of intervention and a final reflection meeting). 4 subjects will take part in this research study.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?
We don’t believe there are any risks from participating in this research.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
You might benefit from being in this study because your confidence in working with students with challenging problem behaviors may increase. Your understanding about best practices for specific data collection may become more clear, increasing your understanding of why a student may be participating in challenging behaviors. You may also find companionship in your peer coach, providing you an outlet and resource for managing difficult behaviors in the classroom.

How Will You Protect my Information?
A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by protecting each participant’s identity. Each participant will be given a pseudonym so that their identity is not revealed. All sites will also be given pseudonyms so that specific sites will not be revealed. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:

- Representatives of Baylor University and the BU Institutional Review Board
- Other collaborating organizations including your school district
• Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research (such as the HHS Office of Human Research Protection or the Food and Drug Administration)

The results of this study may also be used for teaching, publications, or presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, your identity will be protected by using a code number or pseudonym rather than your name or other identifying information.

**Is it possible that I will be asked to leave the study?**

The researcher may take you out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:

- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest
- You can’t make the required study visits
- Other administrative reasons

**Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary**

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.

**Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:
Sarah Willmore  
Phone: [redacted information]  
Email: [redacted information]  

Or

Ryann Shelton  
Email: [redacted information]  

**Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant**

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Baylor University Institutional Review Board  
Office of the Vice Provost for Research  
Phone: 254-710-3708  
Email: irb@baylor.edu
Your Consent

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT:

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

____________________________________
Signature of Subject

____________________
Date
APPENDIX B

Questionnaire Protocol

1. Check box the following demographic information:

Your Name: ______________________________

Years of experience as a special education teacher

☐ 0–3 years
☐ 4–6 years
☐ 7–10 years
☐ 10–13 years
☐ 14–17 years
☐ 17 + years

Race

☐ White
☐ Hispanic
☐ African American
☐ Asian
☐ Not Listed
☐ Prefer not to say
Please indicate the grade band you teach

☐ Primary (Pre-K through 2nd)

☐ Intermediate (3rd through 5th)

☐ Both

☐ Other

2. Describe your setting (self-contained, resource, collaboration classes, low-incidence, high-incidence, or if other please describe).

3. Describe your confidence with collecting data on problem behaviors exhibited by students in your classroom.

4. Describe your current data collection techniques for tracking and analyzing problem behaviors exhibited by students in your classroom.

5. What professional development opportunities have you attended on data collection and behavior reduction strategies?

6. Describe your confidence in using data-driven decisions to provide behavior reduction strategies?

7. Describe your current strategies for addressing problem behaviors within the classroom.
Hello Educators!

My name is Sarah Willmore. I am a doctoral candidate at Baylor University and am currently working on my dissertation. I am writing today to invite you to participate in a research study for elementary special educators who work in your school district. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how elementary special educators describe their self-efficacy related to behavior data collection for behavior reduction before and after peer coaching and to explore their related experiences with peer coaching.

My study will include participating in an initial interview that contains ten questions, five weeks of direct peer coaching interventions through weekly video conferencing platforms, a final interview, and a final reflection two weeks after participation. The coaching process will include outlining Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence formatting to broaden your understanding of why behaviors may occur in the classroom. Throughout the coaching phase, I will work to support you by scheduling weekly meetings. As your peer coach, I will work with you to identify a target student who displays problem behaviors within your classroom. Together we will create a data collection sheet to monitor their behaviors, and we will meet weekly to brainstorm best practices for reducing their problem behaviors. Following the coaching phase, I will ask you to participate in a final interview and a reflection to de-brief your participation in the study.

You will be further contacted if you have been selected to participate in the study.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sarah Willmore
Baylor University Doctoral Candidate
APPENDIX D

Initial Interview Protocol

1. Describe your emotions connected to your classroom performance when working with students who exhibit problem behaviors.

2. Describe your experiences connected to the problem behaviors exhibited by students in your classroom.

3. Describe your current knowledge of data collection procedures for students that exhibit problem behaviors in your classroom.

4. Describe your current level of comfort on data collection procedures for students that exhibit problem behaviors in your classroom.

5. Describe your current knowledge and level of comfort of behavior reduction strategies.

6. Tell me about a time where your felt discouraged about intervening on a student behavior.

7. Describe a time where you feel like your performance as a teacher impacted a behavior outcome.

8. Describe a time where encouragement was utilized by a peer or administrator in your school. Describe how encouragement did or did not alter your performance.

9. Recount a time where you received feedback on your performance to manage problem behaviors in a classroom. Describe this experience and the positive or negative impact it had on your confidence as a teacher.

10. Tell me about a time where you received coaching and feedback.

11. Describe the current professional development opportunities available to you on enhancing your knowledge about working with students with problem behaviors.
APPENDIX E

Final Interview Protocol

1. Describe the experiences related to participating in the peer coaching program.

2. Describe the emotions connected to your classroom performance after participation in the peer coaching program.

3. Describe your current knowledge on data collection for students who exhibit problem behaviors in your classroom.

4. Describe your current level of comfort on behavior reduction strategies for students who exhibit problem behaviors within your classroom.

5. Describe the experiences of receiving direct peer coaching feedback.

6. How did this feedback support your educational practices for data collection?

7. How did this feedback support your educational practices for behavior reduction?

8. Describe the influence that the peer coaching program had on you and your ability to make data-informed decisions for behavior reduction.

9. Describe any changes in your level of confidence after participating in this peer coaching program.
APPENDIX F

Field Notes Protocol

Date: _________________
Participant:_______________
Appointment Times:_______________

Appointment Activities

Appointment Notes

Disposition Notes

Participant Comments, Concerns, Questions

Feedback provided to the Special Educator

Plan for Next Appointment
APPENDIX G

Final Written Reflection

Thank you for participating in my study! Please take a few minutes to reflect on your experience through this google forum. Your responses will be confidential.

Name:

Email:

1. Please comment on your experience participating in this study.

2. Please list some of the benefits you had participating in this study.

3. What plans do you have for behavior reduction and data collection for the upcoming school year after participating in this study?

4. Please list any suggestions or implications you have for researchers expanding this study.


Jones, J. M. (2020). The impact of peer coaching on teacher self-efficacy [Ed.D., Northern Kentucky University]. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2470625328/abstract/9806DB0CF397446APQ/1


