Evidence of learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experiencing difficulty with reading comprehension is widely recognized, along with the need for a variety of research-based instructional practices to address the heterogeneity of factors underlying these comprehension difficulties (Browder et al., 2009; Chiang and Lin, 2007; Knight and Sartini, 2015; Myles et al., 2002; Whalon et al., 2009). Many students with ASD struggle with reading comprehension despite intact decoding and word recognition (Brown et al., 2013; Williamson et al., 2012), and an association between readers with ASD and relative strength in decoding has been established (Nation et al., 2006). There is an expected correlation between phonemic awareness skills and becoming a successful reader; however, this correlation is not consistent in learners with ASD who often display deficits in oral language ability (Browder et al., 2009). Impairments in oral language processing may impact the development of word meaning for learners with ASD (McIntyre et al., 2017), and oral language seems to account for some of the variance in reading comprehension development (Nation et al., 2006).

Myles et al. (2002) found that individuals with ASD scored significantly lower on factual and inferential comprehension questions than their typically developing peers, and Chiang and Lin (2007) found correlations between high word recognition and low reading comprehension in school-age learners with ASD. Despite such correlations, Brown et al. (2013) warn individuals with ASD should not be associated with any one reading profile. McIntyre et al. (2017) investigated the heterogeneity in reading development among high-functioning learners with ASD and found that comprehension difficulties increased along with ASD symptomatology. As symptoms of ASD vary widely among individuals, this finding spotlights a need to provide instructional practices tailored to each learner with ASD.

Difficulties in reading comprehension for many students with ASD may be a result of impaired theory of mind.
(ToM), the ability to take on the perspective of someone else (Colle et al., 2007; Gutstein and Whitney, 2002), differences in executive functioning (EF), including the process of working memory (Adams and Jarrold, 2009; Carnahan et al., 2011; Ricketts, 2011), and/or weak central coherence (WCC) which may result in attention to details rather than the whole (Happé and Frith, 2006). Furthermore, social perspective taking difficulties may affect understanding of figurative language for students with ASD, including ability to comprehend metaphors, irony and idioms (Norbury, 2004). Challenges related to ToM, EF, and WCC influence reading comprehension in the classroom and result in a need for explicit instruction such as providing purposeful information prior to reading, and providing strategy instruction during reading (Carnahan et al., 2011). For example, students with ASD have been found to display comprehension at a lower level when left to read silently without auditory and/or visual supports, and to struggle when then asked to make related inferences (Whalon and Hart, 2011).

**Importance of teacher-selected instructional practices**

According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2000), teacher instruction in reading comprehension is linked to learner outcomes. Teacher instruction in reading, however, may not meet the needs of learners with severe disabilities resulting in a need to identify novel instructional practices for this group (Basil and Reyes, 2003). Educators must incorporate specialized instructional practices into reading instruction in order for learners with severe disabilities to understand and connect to text (Lanter et al., 2012). Similarly, learners with ASD do not always respond to traditional reading instruction, resulting in a need to consider the underlying obstacles to comprehension and to individualize strategy instruction (Nation et al., 2006). This identified need for targeted reading comprehension remediation leads to a focus on teacher-selected instructional practices beyond research-based practices already found to be effective for traditional learners or students with specific learning disability in reading.

The heterogeneity of learners with ASD creates an explicit need for teachers to use individualized instructional approaches to teach academic goals including reading comprehension (Mayton et al., 2010). Teachers, however, report a lack of time and knowledge to seek out research-based practices independently (Burns and Ysseldyk, 2009; Kretlow and Blatz, 2011; Mazzotti et al., 2012). Busby et al. (2012) found that teachers perceived the inclusion of students with ASD in general education as challenging due to a reported lack of training, resources, and specialized skills to address unique student needs. As such, further research is necessary to identify the factors influencing teacher readiness to instruct individuals with ASD such as identifying the existing evidence-based practices (EBPs) to teach reading comprehension, and assessing teacher knowledge and teacher preparedness to implement these instructional practices.

**Effective practices**

The need to identify high-quality research is not only federally mandated, it is essential to good teaching. As a result, a dialogue to define the term evidence-based practice and to identify EBPs to implement in the classroom has transpired (Browder and Cooper-Duffy, 2003; Cook et al., 2012; Odom et al., 2005; Spooner et al., 2011). While a universally accepted definition of EBP does not exist (Reichow et al., 2008), EBPs are considered the gold standard for instructional practices.

Identifying EBPs in special education research is especially complex due to the variability of participants and contextual settings (Odom et al., 2005). Subsequently, special education research by nature often focuses on single-student or small-group single-subject studies to establish efficacy of educational treatments and strategies (Horner et al., 2005). Single-subject research meets the needs of special education teachers through emphasis on students as individuals, replicable methods of testing interventions, cost-effective strategies, and a frequent focus on external and social validity providing practical and generalizable findings (Horner et al., 2005). Despite the benefits of single-subject research for classroom teachers, the nature of conducting research with small number of participants may result in it taking longer to aggregate findings and identify instructional practices as evidence-based.

A search of the literature identified three primary standards being implemented to categorize single-subject research as evidence-based (Horner et al., 2005; Kratochwill et al., 2013; Reichow et al., 2008). Acknowledging the research to practice gap, Horner et al. (2005) developed standards for designating single-subject research as evidence-based, characterizing single-subject research as “a rigorous scientific methodology used to define basic principles of behavior and establish evidence-based practices” (p. 165). In 2008, Reichow et al. built upon the foundation established by Horner et al., strengthening the focus on experimental control including fidelity of strategy implementation, inter-observer agreement, generalizability, and maintenance standards, through development of the Evaluative Method for Determining EBP in Autism enhancing usability of results for learners with ASD. In 2013, Kratochwill and a panel of researchers for the What Works Clearinghouse established single-subject design standards analogous to experimental and quasi-experimental EBP criteria. The quality standards are rigorous. Researchers are required to document at least three attempts to demonstrate the intervention and to
include at least three data points in each phase (Kratochwill et al., 2013). In addition, in order to identify EBPs through single-subject design, there must be a minimum of five studies, conducted by a minimum of three different research teams, including a minimum of 20 total participants (Horner et al., 2005).

A limited number of EBPs have been identified specific to teaching reading comprehension to learners with ASD (Knight and Sartini, 2015). In the absence of EBPs, teachers must turn to the next level of research-based practices available to them, termed effective practices. For the purposes of this study, effective practices refer to research-based practices proven to be effective through quantitative research, but not yet meeting the strict criteria to be deemed evidence-based. Effective practices to teach reading comprehension to learners with ASD were identified through a previous systematic research synthesis (Accardo, 2015). Inclusion criteria required studies use a quasi-experimental or single-case design, include data specific to learners with ASD, include comprehension as a dependent variable, and meet quality indicator coding (Kratochwill et al., 2013; Reichow et al., 2008). The specific instructional practices deemed to be effective practices to teach reading comprehension to learners with ASD are as follows: (1) anaphoric cueing (Solis et al., 2013), a technique in which students are taught to look back to referents in text to identify the meaning of words such as pronouns, (2) compare and contrast diagrams (Carnahan and Williamson, 2013), (3) cooperative learning (Kamps et al., 1994, 1995; Whalon and Hanline, 2008), (4) direct/explicit instruction (Flores and Ganz, 2007, 2009; Roux et al., 2015), (5) visual supports including graphic organizers (Carnahan and Williamson, 2013), (6) question generation (Hua et al., 2012), (7) read alouds (Mims et al., 2012), (8) reciprocal questioning (Whalon and Hanline, 2008), (9) story structure maps/character event maps (Stringfield et al., 2011; Williamson et al., 2015), (10) systematic prompting (Mims et al., 2012), and (11) a multiple strategy approach. While all instructional practices identified are effective, only the practices of graphic organizers and diagrams (visual supports) and systematic prompting have been identified as EBPs (Knight and Sartini, 2015).

**Purpose of study**

A primary goal of this study was to glean insight from teachers into their perceptions and experiences surrounding teaching reading comprehension to learners with ASD through an exploration of teacher preparedness to use the effective instructional practices emerging from the extant research, and teacher-reported effective practices in the classroom. This study is an investigation of teacher preparedness to use the existing research-based effective practices. It is part of a larger study of teacher self-efficacy and outcome expectancy teaching comprehension to learners with ASD (Accardo et al., 2017). Self-efficacy, stemming from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997), asserts a connection between an individual’s perception of their own ability and their related decision-making processes. For example, in a recent study of pre-service teachers’ perceptions related to teaching reading skills, Karabay et al. (2015) report that teachers who are confident in their own abilities to teach critical reading skills are more motivated to establish a learning environment for reading and to employ effective instructional practices. Teacher perceptions of their own ability to use an instructional practice appear to play a role in their effective implementation (Ruble et al., 2011). In other words, teachers are inclined to implement methods they are confident using and to spend time on subjects they feel prepared to teach (Sandholtz and Ringstaff, 2014). This study was guided by the following overarching questions:

1. What instructional practices do teachers report as effective in the classroom when teaching reading comprehension to learners with ASD?
2. Do teachers report preparedness to use the research-recommended effective instructional practices to teach comprehension to learners with ASD?
3. What are the similarities or discrepancies between the practices teachers reported as effective and teacher reported preparedness to implement the research-recommended practices?

Survey methodology was used to gather both descriptive and quantitative data to support understanding of preparedness to use effective practices to teach comprehension by classroom teachers. Non-experimental surveys play an important role as precursors to identifying EBPs (Cook et al., 2008), and the methodology was used as a means for gathering information from teachers with a goal of obtaining a solid representation of what practices teachers perceive as effective in the classroom, and what effective practices teachers feel prepared to implement.

**Methods**

Participants completed a multi-part survey which comprised demographic data collection, the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (Szabo and Mokhtari, 2004), and the researcher created Effective Practices Survey. This study explores the results of the Effective Practices Survey. See survey description in the “Instrument” section.

**Procedure**

Invitations to participate in the study were posted on the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Member Forum and the National Association of Special Education Teacher
Participants
The study received university institutional review board approval, and consent was received from all participants. Data were obtained from 112 participants spanning 23 states, ranging from those teaching within Pre-K through age 18–21 school-based programs, and encompassing public, private, and charter school staff. Inclusion criteria required participants to self-identify as teachers of students with ASD holding primary responsibility for daily instruction, including general education teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, and autism consultants. This study aimed to capture the diversity in teacher experiences by including special education and general education teachers in public and private schools; teachers of learners with high verbal language ability and/or teaching in inclusive settings; and teachers of learners with limited verbal ability and/or teaching in self-contained setting. A total of 41% of participants reported teaching for less than 10 years, and 59% reported teaching for 10 or more years. Professionals not in a primary instructional decision-making role were excluded.

The majority of teachers reported certification in special education (n = 88), followed by general elementary education (n = 67), academic content area certification (e.g. English teacher; n = 26), autism consultant or BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) certification (n = 16), reading specialist (n = 7), and finally speech language pathologist (n = 7). The majority of participants held more than one certification (N = 86; 77%), most commonly dual certification in elementary and special education (34%). This is likely explained by many states (e.g. NJ and NY) requiring teachers to obtain an initial teaching certification prior to obtaining a special education endorsement. In order of majority of responses, teachers reported teaching students in the following grade levels: K–2nd grade (n = 42), 3rd–5th grade (n = 41), 6th–8th grade (n = 30), 9th–12th grade (n = 27), all grade levels (n = 11), Pre-K (n = 3), and ages 18–21 in a high-school setting (n = 3). See participant demographic information in Table 1.

Instrument
The Effective Practices Survey was developed to capture teacher perceptions toward their preparedness to use the 11 research identified effective practices and EBPs emerging from the literature. This study utilized online self-report, believed to be a means for collecting data from a large sample of teachers of learners with ASD. In terms of validity, the researcher-developed Effective Practices Survey was developed with consideration of psychometric measures including content validity, inter-item correlation, and internal consistency. The survey was founded in research-based content, with the 11 effective practices identified through published syntheses of the research. Measures of inter-item correlation and internal consistency were conducted and tolerance levels were analyzed, and indicated no multicollinearity issues. To assess the survey, Cronbach’s alpha was applied, and the resulting reliability coefficient indicates strong internal consistency among participant responses to the 11 survey questions (α = 0.885).

The Effective Practices Survey began with one initial open-ended question, “In your experience what research-based instructional strategies stand out as those you use effectively to teach reading comprehension to students with ASD?” Next, participants were provided with 11 statements, one for each practice, in a Likert scale format. Statement wording was modeled and adapted with consideration of prior methodology (Enochs et al., 2000; Szabo and Mokhtari, 2004) and used a 5-point Likert scale. For example, to assess use of the effective practice direct instruction, teachers were presented with the following statement, “I understand direct instruction well enough to use it as an effective strategy to teach reading comprehension to students with ASD.” Likert-scale response choices ranged from 5 for strongly agree to 1 for strongly disagree.

Data analysis
Responses to the initial open-ended question served as a means to identify similarities and/or discrepancies between teacher-recommended instructional practices, and teacher perceptions of their own preparedness to utilize each effective instructional practice. The first step of data analysis consisted of coding the open-ended data. Coding was conducted using a priori categories to guide the process (Creswell, 2013) with 11 predetermined categories established from the effective practices emerging from the research synthesis. The categories were numbered 1–11, by effective practice, for ease of coding. Possible keywords were considered for each category,
and open coding was conducted with the purpose of capturing all teacher responses that fit within each category. For example, the category cooperative learning was coded as 3. Pre-established potential teacher keywords included peer tutoring and grouping. The keywords were established as examples and not as limits, for example, the teacher phrase think-pair-share was coded for this category based on the cooperative nature of the instructional practice. Finally, the numerical codes were tallied for frequency, and coded phrases were captured in a data table by category. As a quality check, all participant responses were coded by both Author 1 and by a graduate student with resulting inter-rater agreement of 97.8%.

As a second step, teacher responses to the 11 quantitative questions were analyzed. The five Likert scale categories (strongly agree to strongly disagree) were collapsed to dichotomous categories, with one category indicating preparedness to use the effective strategy (encompassing strongly agree and agree responses) and one category indicating undecided or unprepared to use the effective strategy. For example, teacher strong agreement to preparedness and teacher agreement to preparedness to use each effective practice were summed to indicate an overall level of teacher-reported preparedness. Finally, both data sets were compared for resulting similarities and/or discrepancies. Group mean and percentage data indicating the total number of teachers writing in each instructional practice as one they personally found effective were compared with the quantitative survey results.

**Findings**

Research Question 1 asked, What instructional practices do teachers report as effective in the classroom when teaching reading comprehension to learners with ASD? Responses to the open-ended question asking participants to list all the strategies they have found to be effective in teaching reading comprehension to students with ASD showed that direct instruction and graphic organizers were the most highly reported, 17% for direct instruction (n = 19) and 15% for graphic organizers (n = 17). Additional participant responses from highest to lowest percentage reported include the following: reciprocal questioning (7%, n = 8), story structure (5%, n = 4), read-alouds (4%, n = 4), question generation (3%, n = 3), systematic prompts, (3%, n = 3), anaphoric cueing (<1%, n = 1), compare and contrast charts (<1%, n = 1), and cooperative learning (<1%) (see Table 2).

Research Question 2 asked, Do teachers report preparedness to use the research-recommended effective instructional practices to teach comprehension to learners with ASD? Beginning with majority response, teachers reported preparedness to use the instructional practices as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Participant demographics (N = 112).</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area of certification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASD consultant and BCBA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech language pathologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest degree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Master’s degree plus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade-level teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th–12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All grade levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statewide assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily teach students participating in statewide assessment testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily teach students participating in alternate statewide assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach a mix of students who do and do not participate in assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A due to setting or age of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diagnosis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily teach students diagnosed with ASD without intellectual disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily teach students diagnosed with ASD and intellectual disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach a mix of student populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accardo and Finnegan
graphic organizers (93%), read-alouds (91%), direct instruction (89%), compare and contrast charts (88%), multiple strategies approach (79%), cooperative learning (75%), story structure (71%), systematic prompts (69%), question generation (65%), reciprocal questioning (61%), and anaphoric cueing (24%) (see Table 3).

Research Question 3 asked, What are the similarities or discrepancies between the practices teachers reported as effective and teacher reported preparedness to implement the research-recommended practices? Results of the open-ended question were compared with responses of teacher preparedness to use the effective practices. Of the research-identified practices, direct instruction and graphic organizers were the most highly reported; however, the percentage of teachers listing each practice in the initial open-ended response as one they deem as effective was low, 17% for direct instruction (n = 19) and 15% for graphic organizers (n = 17). Additional participant responses from highest to lowest percentage reported include the following: reciprocal questioning (7%, n = 8), story structure (5%, n = 4), read-alouds (4%, n = 4), question generation (3%, n = 3), systematic prompts (3%, n = 3), anaphoric cueing (<1%, n = 1), compare and contrast charts (<1%, n = 1), and cooperative learning (<1%). This range of <1%–15% is lower than the teacher-reported preparedness to use each effective practice range of 24%–91% on the quantitative component of the survey, indicating a discrepancy between teacher-reported effective practices to teach reading comprehension to learners with ASD on the initial open-ended question and teacher-reported preparedness to use each effective practice identified via the quantitative component of the survey.

Findings reveal a discrepancy between teacher-reported effective practices and those recommended by researchers. Table 4 displays the number and percentage of teachers reporting each of the research-recommended practices as effective in the classroom.

**Discussion**

This study found that teachers did not report many of the practices identified in the literature as those they deem effective for teaching comprehension to learners with ASD in the classroom. Teacher reporting of the research-based effective practices was limited. The results of research questions 1 and 2 show that while teachers reported preparedness to use many effective practices when prompted to consider each one in isolation, the lists they generated indicated that they did not prioritize these practices as those found to be effective for learners with ASD. Consequently, a discrepancy between teacher reported effective practices and preparedness to use those practices to teach reading comprehension to learners with ASD emerges. This finding suggests that while teachers may feel confident in their ability to use effective practices in the classroom, they are either not actually using them in the classroom, or they do not, as a collective
IDEA (2004) mandates the use of research-based practices when teaching learners with disabilities. As recommended by Simonsen et al. (2010), teachers of special education students should optimally be qualified as interventionists, able to differentiate instruction using multiple research-based strategies to address individual student needs. It is not clear from the findings of this study why teachers did not list practices they feel prepared to use in their list of effective studies; however, the findings imply teachers may not yet be able to serve in this interventionist role in the area of reading comprehension, either because they lack knowledge of research findings, or they do not feel confident in using them with students with ASD. Results indicate a change is needed and teachers must be supported with instructional options to meet the needs of their students with ASD, especially with the current lack of available EBPs.

**Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to this study. First, it is impossible to know whether participants interpreted the terms related to effective practices in the same way. Definitions of effective practices were not provided and providing definitions may be a consideration for future studies. Without direct observation, it is also impossible to know whether the practices identified as effective are in fact being implemented. Second, despite a range of effective practices in the survey, including direct instruction, the variability in the learners served by the participants might have skewed responses. There is heterogeneity in the factors underlying reading comprehension difficulties in learners with ASD and...
the reading ability of learners with ASD varies from those able to read connected text fluently to those learning to read basic sight words. Participants may be prepared to use a particular practice, but may not perceive it as effective for the population they serve. Since many of the respondents taught at the K-5 level, it is possible that they favored certain strategies for that particular age group. However, disaggregating results by the age of students respondents taught, may not be useful, since the reading abilities of students in these two age groups (K-2, 3-5) would overlap considerably, especially in a population in which atypical patterns in decoding and reading comprehension are expected.

Third, the order of the questioning may have impacted findings. Teachers were asked to write in the practices they have found to be effective first, as the researchers did not want to sway teacher consideration by first questioning them on the specific 11 practices identified through research synthesis. If teachers were provided with a checklist of various practices and were asked to identify which ones research has indicated were effective for learners of ASD, results may have been different. Finally, teacher responses may reflect variations in teacher preparation. It could be hypothesized that teachers with special education certification or BCBA have completed more coursework in ASD, or that teachers with certification in elementary education or reading specialty received more coursework in reading. However, state requirements in coursework vary considerably, for example, in New York special education, teachers are only expected to complete the equivalent of 3 h in ASD. Since there are no data on how many hours of coursework participants received in ASD or literacy, it was decided not to disaggregate results according to certification. Teacher preparation programs may also vary in the way they interpret the role of a teacher. Some preparation programs may focus on implementation fidelity of particular strategies, whereas others may focus on the role of the teacher as an instructional decision-maker.

**Implications for practice**

Findings suggest that teachers feel prepared to use effective practices, yet are not necessarily using them. A network of professional development and support may be needed to help teachers cross this bridge. Teachers of learners with ASD need to be trained in the use of multiple effective practices in order to be self-efficacious in teaching students with a spectrum of strengths and needs in the classroom (Brown et al., 2013). It seems that professional development experiences that increase teacher preparedness to effectively implement instructional practices may improve the self-efficacy of teachers (Jennett et al., 2003) and teacher candidates (Karabay et al., 2015) resulting in increased time spent using the practice to increase student outcomes (Sandholz and Ringstaff, 2014).

The need to differentiate instruction is certainly relevant to instructing students on the autism spectrum, and it appears this need is paramount in the area of comprehension of text (Huemer and Mann, 2012). As indicated by Nation et al. (2006), it is important to note that students with ASD are a heterogeneous group and considerable variation exists among students. It is recommended professional development prepare teachers, professionals, and therapists in how to differentiate usage of effective practices based on the determination of individualized student strengths and goals. A related need emerges for reading comprehension curricula that is comprehensive and adaptable and targets aspects of comprehension students with ASD have been found to struggle with (e.g. use of pronouns, understanding figurative language and characterization). In this way, a teacher working with a student struggling with the use of pronouns can respond to the need with anaphoric cueing, and a teacher noting a student striving to understand a fiction novel can respond with a supportive graphic story structure map. Professional development needs to move toward training teachers to be knowledgeable in using a pool of effective practices, and training teachers to be skilled in how to differentiate these practices appropriately to enhance comprehension instruction of individuals with ASD in the classroom.

Additionally, support and training for teachers in how to access and find research-based practices efficiently emerges as a related need. Ultimately, professional development and training should include tools for teachers to self-identify effective practices along with tools to help teachers to stay current with research initiatives related to using instructional practices with fidelity. For example, teachers may be provided with links to online clearings-houses and databases. School districts might provide teachers with access to journals, so that they can locate comprehensive research syntheses in lieu of individual research studies. In-service workshops might provide guidance on the focused use of methods, such as ongoing training and technical assistance for teaching comprehension to students with ASD. Teachers may benefit from the formation of professional learning communities, working together as a group of educators consisting of school leaders, teachers, counselors, behavior consultants, and support staff who work collaboratively to improve instructional practices that improves the learning and outcomes of students with ASD (Putnam et al., 2009).

**Implications for research**

This study measured teacher preparedness to use 11 specific instructional practices identified through synthesis of current research. The inquiry of teacher preparedness to use effective practices is not the same as teacher actual use of effective practices. Further research is needed to understand this discrepancy, for example, by asking teachers of learners with ASD if they provide explicit reading comprehension instruction, and if they have used a
particular practice, and whether or not it was effective. Implementation studies can determine whether effective practices are being used correctly, whereas continued qualitative research utilizing survey and interview techniques can provide information on why teachers are not implementing practices they are knowledgeable in.

Furthermore, this study identifies a need for increased research to practice communication. In addition to this study, identifying a potential research to practice gap, a subsequent practice to research gap seems plausible. A recommendation for future research prioritizing consideration of the instructional practices that teachers deem effective in their classrooms as the foundation for empirical study emerges. For example, teacher-reported effective practices of annotating text, chunking text, re-teaching, and acting out reading warrant investigation specific to comprehension instruction and learners with ASD. In addition, future research needs to consider the very real constraints and demands of teaching a diverse set of students in its recommendations. In summary, this study identifies a need for communication and collaboration among teachers and researchers.

Conclusion
This study served to elicit an understanding of teacher use of effective instructional practices, and to gain insight into whether or not teachers feel efficacious about using these practices in their classrooms to increase student outcomes. It remains unclear from this study why teachers do not identify the effective practices emerging from the literature as the most effective practices for classroom use, however several possible explanations emerge. First, teachers may be relying on EBPs that exist but are not specific to comprehension to teach reading to learners with ASD (such as ABA and TEACCH). Second, teachers may be overwhelmed by the large number of instructional practices available leading to a lack of clarity in prioritizing their effectiveness. Third, teachers may feel confident in their ability to use the practices found by researchers to be effective in the classroom, yet they may not perceive them to be the most effective instructional practices available. And finally, teachers may be actually choosing not to use the identified practices as they believe them to be ineffective in the classroom. Findings suggest a need for teachers and researchers to work together in consideration of how to ameliorate the existing research to practice gap in the area of comprehension and ASD.

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