Behavior Management Methods for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Comparative Study

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do behavior management strategies for Emotional/ Behavior Disorder students used in public inclusive classrooms compare or contrast to the methods used within special education classrooms in private settings?

- What factors influence any differences between methods used in the two different settings?
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- NCLB – the movement from mainstreaming and resource rooms to all inclusive classrooms.

- Hartford – has been planning for several years and just began implementing this recently.

- Teachers and students alike are being forced to adapt.

- Really severe cases are referred to private special school settings.
SIGNIFICANCE

- Student with EBD have higher drop out rates than other disability groups.

- Students with EBD are also less likely to attend post-secondary schooling than other disability groups.

- Left untreated, children's behavior problems typically multiply, intensify, and diversify over time, thus putting the child at increased risk for academic failure, social isolation, and peer rejection. These, in turn, accelerate the likelihood of school avoidance, alcoholism and drug abuse, and lifespan antisocial behavior (p. 363).


GREENWELL MEDICAL SCHOOL

- Student population = 120

- Services – Therapy: individual, group, occupational therapy, speech therapy

- Must be referred by their public school system

- 4th / 5th grade classroom – 8 students, 1 special education teacher, 2 paraprofessionals
  - Bipolar disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Autism, Oppositional Defiant Disorder
RODRIGUEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Public school in Hartford
- All inclusive classrooms
- 4 special education staff
- Focused on 3 different classrooms
  - Mr. James’ 5th Grade classroom
    - Students – 20 total, 2 EBD
  - Mrs. Leonard’s 5th Grade Classroom
    - Students – 27 total, 2 EBD
  - Co-Teaching 5th Grade Classroom
    - Students – 30 total, 8 EBD
**Methodology**

- Classroom observation
  - At least 3 hours a week for a month in each school

- Informal Conversations
  - with multiple teachers and paraprofessionals

- Formal Interviews
  - Greenwell – 1 Special Education teacher, 2 Paraprofessionals
  - Rodriguez – 4 Regular Education Teachers, 1 Special Education teacher
Without a school-wide commitment to behavior management plans, classroom structure relies too much on the individual classroom teacher’s initiative.

Private, special school settings provide well structured, cohesive behavior management systems in which all classrooms are required to implement while public schools are lax in terms of ensuring each classroom has a plan.
Is There A School Wide Behavior Plan?

**Rodriguez**

- Mr. James: “Not really. I mean there are the general rules, like no running in the hallway. But I tend to do my own thing. I mean, every kid is different and then my student could go into another classroom and be completely different”
- Only required to provide their classroom with a list of general rules, decided upon by the teacher.

**Greenwell**

- Ms. Stuart: “Oh yes, there’s the level system, the point system, positive reinforcements, motivators, and a lot of earning”
- Required to follow these systems and fill out intense paperwork regarding the implementation of this.
Teacher Training

**Rodriguez**
- Felt that she was “not prepared enough” to have EBD students in her classroom. She only “had one special ed. undergraduate course, years ago”. So she decided to just “go with the flow” – Mrs. Little
- When asked what she wished she could change about the system she claimed “school support” as the number one thing she wishes she had. She asked that they spend more time on development of those skills.
- “They can help you find ways to teach reading or math but not what to do when your class is being disrupted”

**Greenwell**
- “Everybody who is hired here has experience in special ed.” – Ms. Stuart
- Mandatory training on behavior management and “Therapeutic Crisis Intervention” – lasts 24 hours in total.
- Provided with manual including proper steps to take in response to most behaviors. Also include structures forms to record behavior such as points sheets and intervention reports.
Variations in Rodriguez

- Behavior Charts
- Rewards
- Punishment
Implications and Further Research

- Schools should provide a solid plan for behavior management in order to ensure standards for all their students, not just EBD students.
- By providing this plan, teachers would feel more confident in their classrooms and students would receive more consistent treatment when transitioning into new classrooms.
- Could possibly look at how many public schools do not have a behavior management system in place in Hartford.