Case Study Analysis of a Resource Room and Self–Contained Classroom Model With Emotionally Disturbed Students

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The chapter focuses on the IDEA disability category of emotional disturbance (ED), which ranks fifth among school-aged students in the United States that have been diagnosed with an exceptionality. ED is a disability that, due to severe behavioral and mental health issues, affects a student's ability to succeed academically in school, which many times leads to the student not finishing high school. The chapter explains that most service delivery models for students who are classified as ED occur in a resource room or self-contained classroom model. Two case studies demonstrate services within such models that have been found to be successful. The chapter also includes a discussion on specific intervention strategies that can assist teachers working with ED students.

INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012), there were 407,000 students with a diagnosis of emotional disturbance (ED) in the U.S. schools during the 2009-2010 school year. The number of students diagnosed with this type of disability has not increased much over the past 40 years. During the 1976-1977 school year, students with special needs who had an emotional disturbance diagnosis were at 0.6% of the total school population, and this percentage only increased to 0.8% by the 2009-2010 school year. This type of disability tends to affect more males than females, by three to one, according to some estimates (Friend, 2011), and an ED student's intelligence quotient (IQ) is typically within the average range (around 100). These students struggle with behavioral and emotional issues to the point that their academic abilities in school and their social lives are severely affected.

Forness and Kavale (2000) found that students with emotional and behavioral disorders are the most under-identified and underserved special needs category in education. Also troubling to this population of students is the lack of positive outcomes that have arisen since the early 1980s (Bradley, Doolittle, & Bartoloota, 2008), based on these students' academic achievements, social interactions, and long-term adult outcomes. Critics believe that many of the difficulties in this field are connected to the definition and criteria of emotional disturbance. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) defines emotional disturbance as:

a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and (e) a tendency to develop symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (§ 300.8[c][4])

According to (IDEA, 2004), emotional disturbance does include schizophrenia. However, it does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

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