

2002 Hawaii International Conference on Education

Session Title:

Characteristics of Effective Classrooms for Students with Emotional Disturbances

Short Description:

This workshop will provide an overview of past research and practices pertinent to the education of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Implications for teachers, administrators and teacher preparation programs will be shared. The need for additional empirical research will also be discussed.

Abstract:

“Emotionally Disturbed” is the categorical label given by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to describe those children who have atypical and pervasive behavior problems. Generally, such children are not developmentally disabled. The most important characteristic for the majority of them is their inability to control behavior, specifically impulses to do unusual or bizarre things. Their reactions to anxious or stressful situations usually lead to behavior that is inappropriate and viewed negatively by peers or adults (Wehman, 2001).

The number of school age children identified as emotionally disturbed represents the third largest category of students with disabilities (Wehman, 2001). They also represent one of the most challenging populations for schools and educators to serve. These challenges include: 1) the management of severe, sometimes violent, behavior, 2) balancing behavior control with academic and social learning, 3) integrating multiple services, including those from the mental health field, 4) increasing the retention rates of special educators, and 5) providing relevant pre-service and in-service training for staff.

This workshop will examine existing efficacy research regarding the education of students with emotional disabilities. The workshop will also highlight key recommended practices associated with quality educational programming for this population of

students. The workshop will be conducted in a lecture format, with the use of a digital projector and PowerPoint presentation. Handouts will be provided to workshop attendees. The workshop presenters will be Dr. Philip Patterson, Coordinator of Special Education, and Mrs. Wendy Terrazas, Lecturer at California State University, Bakersfield.

The workshop will address several issues related to educational programming for students with emotional disturbances. The following agenda will be adhered to:

- I. Definitions
 - Legal
 - Professional Associations
 - Controversy
- II. Programming Problems
 - Managing Behavior
 - Balancing Classroom Management and Curricular Needs
 - Demands of Integrating Multiple Services
 - Staff Attrition
 - Relevant Pre-Service and In-Service Training
- III. Quality Practices Identified in Research and Pertinent Literature
 - Environmental Variables (Gallegar, 2000)
 - Instructional Practices (Whelan, 1998)
 - Adult-Student Interaction (Cavin, 1998)
 - Behavioral Strategies (Reitz, 1994, McDonough, Blady, & Hermetz, 1996)
 - Family Support (Bauer & Shea, 1999)
- IV. The Need for Empirical Research
 - Outcome Studies
 - Longitudinal Research
 - Qualitative Research

The proposed session will identify current and emerging standards for best practices on several levels. Legal mandates and ethical considerations affirming the rights of students with emotional disabilities to receive services in the least restrictive environment will be incorporated throughout the workshop.

Additionally, the importance of assessment, planning, and collaboration between

parents, students, mental health workers, and educational stakeholders in the provision of services will be underscored. Finally, the information and studies discussed in the workshop will have an empirical research basis.

The issue of educating students with emotional disabilities has significance for administrators, faculty from institutions of higher education, general and special education teachers, school support staff, parents, and students. The workshop session will provide information to teacher preparation personnel. The research reviewed will allow them to reflect upon the quality of their programs and practices in preparing teachers. The information from the session will inform and alert teachers, support staff, and parents about promising practices in working with students who have emotional disturbances. The session will furnish insight to school personnel regarding the status of programming: current training methods, systems of support, as well as effective and ineffective interventions. Most important, the session may help to better the quality of education for students with emotional disturbances.

References:

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- Cavin, Clark. (1998). Maintaining sanity in an insane classroom: How a teacher of students with emotional disturbances can keep from becoming an emotionally disturbed teacher. Education and treatment of children, 21(3), 370-385.
- Gallagher, Patricia. (2000). Teaching students with behavior disorders: Techniques and activities for classroom instruction. Denver, CO: Love Publishing Company.
- McDonough, L, Blady, R., & Hermetz, M. (1996). Utilizing experientially based programming in an urban day school/day treatment setting. Spawning new ideas: A cycle of discovery. ERIC Document: ED 416-062

Reitz, Andrew. (1994). Implementing comprehensive classroom-based programs for students with emotionhal and behavioral problems. Education and Treatment of Children, 17(3), 312-331.

Wehman, Paul. (2001). Life beyond the classroom. Baltimore, MA: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

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