

Title: Instructional strategies for seriously emotionally disturbed (SED) students in elementary school

Date: December 2016

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Question: Could you provide research-based instructional strategies for seriously emotionally disturbed (SED) students in elementary school?

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### Response:

We have prepared the following memo with information on instructional strategies for seriously emotionally disturbed (SED) students in elementary school. Citations include a link to a free online version, when available. All citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the document. We have not done an evaluation of the methodological rigor of these resources, but provide them for your information only.

### **References**

Connecticut State Department of Education (2012). *Guidelines for identifying and educating students with serious emotional disturbance*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/publications/edguide/ed\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/publications/edguide/ed_guidelines.pdf)

*Excerpt:* This document is a revision of the Guidelines for Identifying and Educating Students with Serious Emotional Disturbance published by the CSDE in 1997. The document is intended to provide guidance to school teams, including parents, guardians, surrogate parents and mental health professionals, to make appropriate decisions regarding eligibility and specialized services for students with ED as defined in the IDEA 2004. The principles and practices provided in this document also assist school teams in addressing the needs of children experiencing significant behavioral and emotional difficulties and/or children suspected of having an emotional disturbance. The 2012-revised document, Guidelines for Identifying and Educating Students with Emotional Disturbance, has seven primary goals:

1. To provide educators and mental health professionals in Connecticut with recommended practices and procedures concerning the provision of services to students experiencing behavioral, social or emotional issues within the context of an SRBI framework.
  2. To provide educators and mental health professionals in Connecticut with recommended practices and procedures concerning assessment of students.
  3. To provide educators and mental health professionals in Connecticut with recommended practices and procedures concerning eligibility determinations.
  4. To promote the use of statewide, uniform and valid identification processes and procedures that are nonbiased, culturally relevant and nondiscriminatory.
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5. To improve academic achievement and outcomes for students experiencing emotional disturbance.
6. To provide updated reference to current legislation and regulation affecting students identified as eligible for special education due to an emotional disturbance.
7. To provide updated reference to current best practices in meeting the needs of students identified as eligible for special education due to an emotional disturbance.

Farley, C., Torres, C. Wailehua, C. T. & Cook. L. (2012, Winter). Evidence-based practices for students with emotional and behavioral disorders: Improving academic achievement. *Beyond Behavior*, 37-43. Retrieved on December 12, 2016, from <http://elementaryemotionaldisturbance.weebly.com/uploads/1/4/7/3/14738022/farley2012.pdf>

*Excerpt:* In this article we (a) provide an overview of EBPs and their importance for students with EBD, (b) describe two EBPs shown to be effective in increasing academic outcomes for students with EBD, and (c) assist teachers in locating and implementing additional EBPs by providing a step-by-step guide.

Hanover Research (2013). *Effective programs for emotional and behavioral disorders*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved on December 12, 2016, from <https://www.district287.org/uploaded/A Better Way/EffectiveProgramsforEmotionalandBehavioralDisordersHanover2013.pdf>

*Excerpt:* In the following report, Hanover Research presents best practices and effective programs for students with conduct and behavioral disorders. The first section discusses general best practices and strategies in meeting the needs of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. The second section profiles two tiered programs, Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (also referred to as School-Wide Positive Behavior Support), which the literature identifies as effective in supporting students with conduct disorders and other behavioral issues.

McDuffie, K. A., Landrum, T. J & Gelman, J. A. (2008, Winter). Co-teaching and students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Beyond Behavior*, 17(2), 11-16. Retrieved on December 12, 2016, from <https://dpico-teaching.wikispaces.com/file/view/McDuffie+Kandrum+%26+Gelman+2008.pdf>

*Abstract:* In the past decade, increased emphasis on academic instruction for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) has replaced the misguided notion that teachers must focus exclusively or primarily on behavior problems before they can effectively teach students with EBD. Numerous scholars have noted that academic instruction should be the first line of defense in dealing with the prevention, amelioration, and treatment of EBD. Although the shift to an academic focus represents a positive step, it is important to examine the contexts in which students with EBD receive instruction. A number of strategies have been proposed to enhance the participation and success of students with disabilities in regular classes. One of these is co-teaching, which generally refers to any arrangement in which a special education teacher and general education teacher work together in the same physical environment to provide instruction to a group that includes students with and without disabilities. This article discusses a number of different models of co-teaching and explores the impact of co-teaching arrangements on a broad array of student outcomes.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (2016). *Guidelines for serving students with emotional disturbance in educational settings*. Bismarck, ND: Author. Retrieved on December

12, 2016, from

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/60/2016RevisedEDguidelinesFormatted.pdf>

*Excerpt:* The Guidelines for Serving Students with Emotional Disturbance in Educational Settings is intended to serve as a resource for IEP teams looking to comprehensively address the needs of this population of students. The purpose of these guidelines is to:

- Update previous guidance on serving students with ED;
- Clarify eligibility criteria for ED to promote consistent understanding and application in identification practices;
- Promote consistency in evaluation procedures that are culturally sensitive and non-biased, and yield results that assist with determining eligibility and the development of effective educational programming;
- Provide suggestions to school-based practitioners on evidence-based practices and strategies to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students with ED;
- Provide guidance to IEP teams on placement procedures, which include a focus on necessary supports and services in the least restrictive environment (LRE);and
- Identify state and national resources for educators that support school-based programming, as well as family and community supports that will contribute to improved outcomes for students with ED.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Washington. (2005). *Teaching students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders: Best practices guide to intervention*. Olympia, WA: Author. Retrieved on December 12, 2016, from <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/6AA00136-AE40-4976-947C-CF10EB3D5C20/0/InterventionGuide.pdf>

*Excerpt:* This best practices guide is written for general and special education teachers who work with students that demonstrate severe emotional and behavioral disorders in the classroom. As will be described later, students in today's classroom are demonstrating challenging behaviors that are more frequent and intensive than in previous years. Teachers complain about not having the knowledge base, skills, or confidence to teach these students. In addition, there is a severe shortage of teachers trained in this area. This shortage of teachers is also coupled with a high burn-out rate among existing teachers, since students with emotional and behavioral disorders are especially challenging to teach. Our goal in writing this manual is to provide current and future teachers with information regarding effective practices for working with students that are demonstrating emotional and behavioral disorders in the classroom...Part I of this guide gives an overview of best practices for teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This overview begins with a discussion of issues and causal factors relating to students with emotional and behavior disorders. Selected proactive interventions are then described, followed by a discussion of individualized behavioral programming. Part II of this guide presents 10 common problem behaviors that our contributing teachers have faced. Suggested techniques for successful intervention are then provided in detail. These chosen problem areas are those that practicing teachers at Oak Grove Elementary and Firwood Secondary Schools designated as the most important issues they feel teachers face today in their daily interactions with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. The interventions listed are from the voice of the teachers, as the interventions are designed by teachers themselves. The guide ends with an extensive reference list which can be a valuable resource for those looking for additional information.

Quinn, M. M., Osher, D., Warger, C., Hanley, T., DeHaven Bader, B., Tate, R., & Hoffman, C. (2000). *Educational strategies for children with emotional and behavioral problems*. Washington, DC:

American Institutes for Research, Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice. Retrieved on December 12, 2016, from [http://cecp.air.org/aft\\_nea.pdf](http://cecp.air.org/aft_nea.pdf)

*Excerpt:* It goes without saying that there are no easy answers or “quick fixes” when working with students with emotional disturbance and behavioral problems. However, over the years, educators and families have accumulated a wealth of information about how to work with these students; while there is much that remains unknown, both practitioners and researchers have much to say about how to provide learning opportunities for just such students...Perhaps it also goes without saying that teachers, paraprofessionals, and school psychologists (whom we sometimes refer to collectively as educators) are on the front lines when it comes to ensuring that students with emotional disturbance and behavioral problems are given every opportunity to learn. Hence, this booklet was designed to provide educators with a place to start—a base of practical ideas for helping students to build a successful education experience...This booklet is predicated on a strengths-based approach that considers the whole child. The instructional practices presented herein reflect the understanding that all students have strengths that can provide a basis for curriculum planning, instructional programming, and classroom management. Effective teaching makes use of students’ strengths and builds instructional programs that capitalize on what students are able to achieve, and help them to meet high academic standards and high standards of conduct.

Torres, C., Farley, C. & Cook, B. G. (2012). A special educator’s guide to successfully implementing evidence-based practices. *Exceptional Children*, 45(1), 64-73.

*Abstract:* Special educators often become frustrated when, despite their best efforts to help students attain their goals and maximize their achievement, their instruction does not result in the desired outcomes. With so many practices being promoted on the Internet, during in-service trainings, at professional conferences, and by their colleagues, it can be difficult to know what to try and who to trust. Evidence-based practices can be trusted to work because they have been shown to be effective by a body of research studies that meet rigorous criteria related to research design, quality, quantity, and effect size. In this article the authors provide an overview of sources of evidence-based practices and specific practices shown to be evidence-based for students with, and at-risk for, disabilities. To guide special educators in their identification and application of evidence-based practices, a 10-step framework for implementing evidence-based practices effectively is provided.

U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) & American Institutes for Research. (1994). *Agenda for achieving better results for children and youth with serious emotional disturbance*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from <http://cecp.air.org/resources/ntlagend.asp>

*Abstract:* This report documents the problem of educating students with serious emotional disturbance, reviews the legislative and administrative background, and identifies seven strategic targets in a national agenda for these children. The magnitude of the problem is supported by data on these students concerning academic outcomes, graduation rates, school placement, school absenteeism, dropout rates, encounters with the juvenile justice system, and identification rates of students of varying socio-economic backgrounds. The legislative and administrative background includes Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and activities of the Office of Special Education Programs. The report then discusses the following seven interdependent strategic targets: (1) expand positive learning opportunities and results; (2) strengthen school and community capacity; (3) value and address diversity; (4) collaborate with families; (5) promote appropriate assessment; (6) provide ongoing skill development and support; and (7) create comprehensive collaborative systems. Three cross-cutting themes are also stressed: first,

collaborative efforts must extend to initiatives that prevent emotional and behavioral problems from developing or escalating; second, services must be provided in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner; and, third, services must empower all stakeholders and maintain a climate of possibility and accountability.

## **Methods**

### **Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search**

Instructional strategies AND seriously emotionally disturbed/SED students/serious emotional disturbance AND elementary school

### **Search of Databases**

EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, Google, and Google Scholar

### **Criteria for Inclusion**

When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).
- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the West Region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0002, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.