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DETRIMENTAL STUDENT BEHAVIORS AS PERCEIVED BY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

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The purpose of this study was to identify a common core of behaviors as perceived by elementary teachers who work with socially and emotionally disordered (S-ED) students. Fifty elementary teachers were randomly selected from a pool of 525 teachers to participate by giving perceptions. The teachers rank ordered ten general, ten socialization, and ten communication asocial behaviors in terms of these behaviors' detrimental effect on instruction. The behaviors ranked as the most detrimental (the common core) were those describing active and/or aggressive actions. When S-ED students exhibit active and aggressive behaviors, elementary teachers perceive them to be behaving in a manner detrimental to instruction.

Clarizo and McCoy (1976) reported that intervention programs for socially and emotionally disordered (S-ED) students are relatively new. Yet, the mandates of P.L. 94-142, specifically a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, require that all S-ED students receive special services in and out of the regular classroom. Data are available that support the effectiveness of special educators working with S-ED in the mainstream (Kerlin and Latham, 1977). Also, Kounin and Ob- radovic (1976) proposed that classroom teachers could successfully meet S-ED students' needs using group management techniques. However, S-ED children/ youth more than any other handicapped students require a coordinated educational effort (Whelan, 1978) that incorporates all environmental settings (Hal- lahan and Kauffman, 1978). A pertinent question that evolves is — "Do special and regular educators have a cluster of behaviors they perceive to be detrimental across their programs?" Probably a more important question relating to main- streaming S-ED students is whether or not classroom teachers as a group perceive a common core of asocial behaviors.

The purpose of this study was to identify a common core of problem behav- iors as perceived by elementary teach- ers who work with mainstreamed S-ED students. These teachers were surveyed to obtain their rank ordering of general, socialization, and communication behav- iors. Problem behaviors were delineated according to those that were most detri- mental to instruction and those that were least detrimental.

Method and Procedures

Fifty elementary teachers (47 female and three males) were randomly select- ed to participate in this study. They were in a pool of 525 teachers attend- ing graduate education classes or in- service workshops. The teachers taught kindergarten through sixth grade. They had one to 32 years of classroom ex- perience, with an average of seven years. The teachers worked in rural, urban, and suburban schools with a student population from 160 to 650. The ra- cial distribution was forty-two white, seven black, and one Native American.

A questionnaire was designed to se- cure the teachers' rank order percep- tion of asocial behaviors. The question- naire had three sections with ten be-

aviors in each section: (a) General Behavior, e.g., lacks motivation and interest, demands excessive attention, does not follow directions, etc.; (b) Socialization, e.g., tends to avoid . . . group activity, is uncooperative and difficult when working with teachers, isolates himself/herself in the classroom, etc.; and (c), Communication, e.g., uses immature verbal behavior, talks excessively to peer or peers, utilizes verbal aggression — screaming and/or verbal tantrums, etc. The directions specified that the teachers rank the behaviors in each section one to 10, with one being the behavior most detrimental to their instructional efforts and ten the least detrimental.

The teachers, individually and in small groups, were seated in classrooms. After a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the study, the questionnaires were distributed. The teachers read the directions, asked questions to fully understand the procedures, and the teachers ranked the behaviors.

Results and Discussion

The three asocial general behaviors ranked the most detrimental were: (a) does not follow directions; 56 percent of the teachers ranked 1, 2, or 3; (b) Lacks motivation and interest; 52 percent ranked 1, 2, or 3; and (c), Exhibits short attention span/distractibility; 42 percent teachers ranked 1, 2, or 3. The three general behaviors ranked the least detrimental to instruction were: (a) Engages in sullen, withdrawn behavior; 36 percent of the teachers ranked 8, 9, or 10; (b) lacks confidence and fears failure; 40 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10; and (c), Has poor attendance record; 48 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10.

In terms of the inappropriate socialization behaviors, the teachers ranked the following three as being most detrimental to instruction: (a) Tries to be the center of attention; 64 percent ranked 1, 2, or 3; (b) Is uncooperative and

difficult when working in group situations; 50 percent ranked 1, 2, or 3; and (c), Is uncooperative and difficult when working with teachers; 38 percent ranked 1, 2, or 3. The least detrimental socialization behaviors were: (a) Isolates himself/herself in the classroom; 44 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10; (b) Exhibits excess loyalty to delinquent friends; 48 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10; and (c), Tends to avoid interactions with adults; 48 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10.

The three communication behaviors that were ranked as being most detrimental to instruction were: (a) Talks excessively, e.g., to self, with peers, etc.; 72 percent ranked 1, 2, or 3; (b) Repeats or echoes teacher's or peer's speech; 52 percent of the teachers ranked 1, 2, or 3; and (c), Engages in lying when addressed or disciplined; 50 percent ranked 1, 2, or 3. The communication behaviors viewed as being least detrimental to instruction were: (a) Complains about school, home, community, teachers, parents, etc.; 44 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10; (b) Manifests immature verbal behaviors, e.g., syntax disorders, limited vocabulary; 48 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10; and (c), Exhibits a speech problem, e.g., rate, articulation, etc.; 56 percent ranked 8, 9, or 10.

The data suggest that the S-ED students who were most active and aggressive with their inappropriate behaviors were generally perceived as being the most detrimental to the instructional process. In addition, teachers tended to view behaviors that were personally confronting to them as highly disruptive. The least detrimental behaviors were those that were introvertive in nature.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify a common core of inappropriate behaviors that were most detrimental (and least detrimental) to instruction in an

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