

Effective Strategies for Teaching Elementary Students

With Behavior Disorders

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the best methods for teaching elementary students who have behavioral disorders. This research provides strategies educators and others can quell disruptive behaviors before, during, and after they occur. Additionally, this research demonstrates how a learning atmosphere can be promoted with minimum interruptions to both the disruptive student and the other members of the class. Suggestions for teaching and keeping the students' attention on the classroom content are included. Recognized methods of conducting successful learning and application of that learning are addressed. Addressing individual learning styles and examples of methods to address these differences are explored.

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Educators are in a position to help to form students' ways of thinking. Students learn in different ways. Various methods need to be employed in order to effectively teach each student. Students have a wide array of disorders which affect their behavior. Students with behavior disorders pose an added challenge to educators.

The purpose of this paper was to explore a variety of educational methods to teach students who have behavior disorders and describes how some support teams are developed. Some problems that may contribute to student's undesirable behaviors are described. Some methods that may help educators to gain control of certain circumstances that interrupt the students' ability to learn are also described.

Review of the Literature

The Student's Support Team

In order to know how to intervene when a student is troubled, educators must first know the student's history. Educators work closely with other team members such as the student's parents, the school psychologist, general education teachers, and at times may even be called upon to work with social workers, and other outside professionals.

When an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is recommended, the National Dissemination Center for Disabilities (NICHY) advises that team members should include: the child's parents, at least one regular education teacher if the student is included in the regular classroom, at least one of the child's special education teachers or providers, a representative of the school (who is qualified to supervise, knows the general curriculum, and the available resources), an individual who can interpret the results, when appropriate the child, agencies who may be paying for or providing services, and other individuals who have knowledge about the child such as a relative or a child care provider. It is the opinion of this researcher that the aide that works on a day-to-

day basis with the child who is a provider and knows the workings of the school as well as the student should also be included.

Each one of these team members provides some insight as to how the student might act in certain circumstances. According to Curtis (2008), research is of vital importance to our understanding of a child's behaviors and needs. Team members must realize that individuals have many different ways of thinking as Mel Levine described in his book, *A Mind at a Time*. He stated that, "all kinds of people have all kinds of minds."

Before the team begins the IEP meeting, the facilitators should have met and spoken with the student to get a handle on where the student's thoughts may be coming from. Background information is needed to assess any problems that may occur during the IEP meeting or in future work with the student. This information may be in the form of documentation, or from informal sources such as meeting face-to-face with the parents or guardians. Additionally, past teachers may need to be consulted as to the history of the student's problems in the classroom. Every student with special needs should benefit from an Individual Education Plan that is based on the student's abilities and strengths need to be encouraged and it is the duty of educators to recognize these strengths. (Levine, 1994)

Understanding the Student's Problems

Next, a selection of syndromes, disorders, or difficulties that individual students may encounter is examined. Edwards (1999) identified some of issues that may be factors in a student's difficulties including physical issues, emotional issues, developmental issues and health and medical issues.

Physical issues. Physical issues can involve the student's appearance. Society places great emphasis on the way society looks and dresses. Television shows and commercials often

make it seem as though everyone should be tall, thin, strong and well dressed. Edwards (1999) suggests,

Children who look weak and uncoordinated may be neglected or reflected by people outside the family. When children don't feel accepted by others, their self-esteem suffers. Some become people pleasers, doing almost anything to get people to like them. Others lose their desire to please others, feeling that their efforts are fruitless. (p. 24)

Emotional issues. Emotional issues can include a combination of anger, hurt, inadequacy, embarrassment, confusion, sadness, fear and even happiness (Pertstein & Tharall, 1996). When students show anger by throwing mild temper tantrums such as going into their room and slamming a door, Kapalka (2007) recommends these flare-ups be left alone. When a child begins to act out in a violent way, time-out is a behavior management strategy that is mainly successful as a consequence for angry outbursts. This takes the student away from the chaos that caused the student to misbehave in the first place and provides a less stimulating environment (Kapalka, 2007). Time-out presents a form of mild punishment by removing the stimulation the student craves and make it a punishment through boredom. It must be emphasized that this method requires that absolutely no attention be given to the offender during the time-out.

Feelings of inadequacy can have an enormous impact on a student's success. Lack of self-esteem leads to an "I can't do it," attitude. Some students start by trying really hard to complete an assignment but then suffer defeat by becoming overly frustrated and quitting. Then, there are others who won't even try. A child's perception of himself affects the types of friends that he has and the way that he treats others. This perception of himself continues throughout life and even affects the type of person that he will marry and how successful he will be (Brigg,

1975). Therefore, it seems impossible to an individual with a low opinion of his/her ability to accomplish certain tasks to become productive in those areas (Tripp, 1999). Additionally, low self-esteem tends to be repetitive as well as destructive. Friends and family may find the individual undesirable and isolate them from the caring feeling they seek. These feelings should not be perpetuated by education professionals who are entrusted with the teaching and care of students, including those with low self-esteem.

Some children suffer a loss of self-esteem when too many of them are misjudged overgeneralized and blamed for laziness. Additionally, students' strengths need to be emphasized and their weaknesses attended to (Levine, 2002).

Frequently educators misjudge, snub, and use unsuitable correction for students with disabilities that may be a result of misinformation regarding the students' abilities, skills, and interests. More information about each student needs to be made available to all teachers. Additionally, educators must examine and understand correct methods of behavior management (Jageman, 2004).

There are many disorders that may cause emotional disorders. Students may suffer with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) attention-deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities (LD), and mood disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety disorders, in addition to other issues. These disorders may exist as co-morbid or alone and can often cause emotional stress.

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (1999) lists the functional symptoms of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD): frequent temper tantrums, excessive arguing with adults, active defiance and refusal to comply with adult requests and rules, deliberate attempts to annoy or upset people, blaming others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior, often

being touchy or easily annoyed by others, frequent anger and resentment, mean and hateful talking when upset, and seeking revenge. Five to fifteen percent of all school age children are afflicted with ODD (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 1999).

Attention- deficit-hyperactive disorder also can contribute to why some students are regarded to be unruly. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM IV) determines that a person must have a minimum of six or more attention or six or more impulsivity characteristics. There is generally a combination of both.

Other psychiatric disorders are likely to occur in children who have ADHD. Barkley tells us that “45% of all children with ADHD have at least one other disorder” (Barkley, 2000, p. 103). Oppositional and defiant behavior often is exhibited by children who have ADHD and 45% may develop the more serious diagnosis of conduct disorder. Children with ADHD also have problems with attention and impulse control (Barkley, 2000, p. 104). “Between 20% and 30% of children with ADHD have at least one type of LD, in math, reading or spelling” (Barkley, 2000, p. 98). Another problem children with ADHD may experience is an inability to sleep well.

Learning disabilities. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1999) indicates that children who have learning disabilities generally are of normal intelligence. Still they have problems processing instructions and concentrating no matter how much effort they put into learning. They estimate that 1 in 10 school aged children are affected by learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are thought to be the result of a defect in the part of the nervous system that affects receiving, processing, and/or communicating systems. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry lists the following symptoms of learning disabilities:

- difficulty understanding and following instructions

- trouble remembering what someone just told him or her
- failure to master reading, spelling, writing, and/or math skills, and thus fails schoolwork
- difficulty distinguishing right from left; difficulty identifying words or a tendency to reverse letters, words, or numbers (for example, confusing 25 with 52, “b” with “d” or “on” with “no”)
- lack coordination in walking, sports, or small activities such as holding a pencil or tying a shoelace
- loses or misplaces homework, schoolbooks, or other items
- cannot understand the concept of time (i.e., confused by yesterday, today, and tomorrow). (p. 16).

Children who have learning disabilities do not want to appear stupid. They often act out because they would rather seem as though they are bad (The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 1999).

These students require a lot of understanding and special attention from educators, parents, and the whole IEP team. It is easy to understand why such a disorder would cause emotional flare-ups for the child and any other parties involved in the situation.

Mood disorders. Depression is a mood disorder that frequently causes a student to either act out or withdraw causing an interruption in the learning process. Educators frequently need to interrupt the flow of the lesson to attend to the student who has gone into a shell or is creating a disturbance. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology (AACAP) reveals that 5% of students might also be diagnosed with depression (2008). The Britannica online dictionary defines depression as: “a mood or emotional state that is marked by feelings of low self-worth or guilt and a reduced ability to enjoy life” (Britannica Online Dictionary, 2011).

Depression can also develop into a psychiatric disorder showing symptoms such as persistent feelings of hopelessness, dejection, poor concentration, lack of energy, inability to sleep and sometimes suicidal tendencies (Bolger, 2009).

Bipolar disorder is one of the most misunderstood of all disorders. Children with this disorder often are seen as manipulative attention seekers (Healthmad.com, 2008).

When students are falsely accused of laziness, when problems are attributed glibly to poor attitudes, when children come to believe that they “were born to fail” the result is a population of functionally crippled individuals, young persons who may then seek alternative, perhaps even antisocial and potentially self-destructive pathways toward gratification. (Levine, 1994, p. 304)

They swing from being highly euphoric into dark moods and many express themselves in extremely angry outbursts and at times may become violent, while at other times they may be just as calm and collected as any other student. These children are sometimes quite talented and intelligent, for instance, MacCabe (2010) points out that according to a Swedish study, students who had the top grades at school were more likely to develop a bipolar disorder.

Bipolar disorder occurs with other co-morbid conditions and it is unusual for a bipolar disorder to exist without other conditions. The other conditions are commonly the reason for a referral As ADHD and bipolar disorder regularly go hand-in-hand (Faedda & Austin, 2006).

Anxiety. The next group of disorders to be considered is the collection of anxiety disorders. Educators must understand that anxiety can also cause disruptions in the classroom.

Anxiety is defined as:

Painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind usually over an impending or anticipated ill.

Fearful concern or interest, a cause of anxiety “ or “an abnormal and overwhelming

sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse). By doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it. (Merriam Webster Online, 2011)

Panic disorders are defined as:

A disorder characterized by sudden attacks of fear or panic. The episodes may resemble a heart attack. They may strike at any time and occur without a known reason, but more frequently are triggered by specific events or thoughts, such as taking an elevator or driving. The attacks may be so terrifying that some people associate their attacks with the place they occurred and will refuse to go there again. Symptoms of panic attacks may include tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), chest pressure or pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, tingling and anxiety. (Dryden-Edwards, 2011, p. 4753)

Other reasons why students might disrupt the classroom are too numerous to mention in this document. The point is, the entire educational staff and IEP team must strive to understand any underlying cause for students' disturbing behaviors. This knowledge will give educators the basis for how to handle each student, as well as each situation. It is important to recognize that each problem is as unique as the individual. It is often necessary to take into account that the student may just be having a bad day. In this case, the teacher may consider referring the student to the school counselor.

Gaining Students' Trust

In order to be an effective teacher, one must first earn the students' trust. Without this primary ingredient it will be just as if the teacher were talking into a raging windstorm. If students do not feel the teacher really cares about them personally, they may be indifferent to the material being presented. A teacher must be genuine and students are more likely to respond

positively to a person who expresses a personal interest in them. A student's confidence in the teacher must begin from the very first meeting and remain consistent as the year progresses. Students who respect the teacher are less likely to become a problem. Ghiora (2010) recommends steps that may lead to gaining each student's trust are: (a) Greeting the students with a smile and hello to show them that you recognize them as being important, (b) Conducting a thoughtful conversation which will convey to them that you are trustworthy. Say nice things to them making sure that any and all compliments are sincere, (c) Include the students in your lessons to maintain their attention to the subject, (d) be helpful both academically and with personal help, such as lending a pencil to a student that is without one. This will increase a student's confidence and competence.

Another way to earn student's trust is by showing them that the trust is mutual. One way of doing this is by allowing them to teach the class or to have them tutor younger students. Allowing them to take on such responsibilities shows the teacher's belief in their competence. Teachers may also talk about trust and being trustworthy from time to time, however it is critical that the discussion doesn't come across as blame or a lecture (Kaustin, 2010).

Responding to Disruptions

Teachers often have rigid time constraints due to the fact that each day is generally set up in periods of 45 minutes or less. For instance, a math lesson that isn't completed in the allotted period of time must be carried over and cut into the next days' time frame. Also certain benchmarks and guidelines need to be met at the end of the year. Thus, any distraction in the classroom may lead to further chaos and disrupt the learning process.

The University of South Carolina Center for Teaching Excellence outlines strategies for handling classroom distractions. They encourage standards should be established, and it must be

stated that a classroom disturbance of any type will not be tolerated. Educators should address problems before they get out of hand. It should also be made clear that a disturbance shows a lack of respect for other students. The teacher should be aware that domination of the discussion by one student may serve as a distraction, and that students who side-track the discussion need to be watched. Finally, students should be warned that under no uncertain terms, deliberate offensive comments will be dealt with immediately.

In order to maintain authority in the classroom a teacher needs to be assertive while being fair. The rationale for rules needs to be clarified and it is imperative that the rules be enforced. Rules should be made noticeably visible and when a blatant disruption does occur, the teacher must remain calm and composed. He or she should never amplify the problem by displaying hostility. As recommended by (Cook, Tessier, Klein, 1987) a few ways to diffuse the situation include: (a) Reminding the student of the rules, (b) standing next to the disorderly student while you are teaching, (c) asking the student a question such as “Can you add to the discussion?” in order to redirect their attention, and (d) asking the student to meet with you after class to clear up problems in a quiet discreet way (p. 256). Some disruptions are not as obvious, so teachers must remain constantly aware of the rhythm of the room. If there is an underlying current of hostility or boredom among even the best of students, action needs to be taken.

Holding Students’ Attention

Probably one of the most important elements of teaching is gaining and holding students’ attention. There are numerous distractions around a classroom. At times teaching a class requires a certain amount of showmanship and educators must make each student feel involved and important. Some tips for keeping students engaged include: thinking of the classroom as a stage of learning, being entertaining, using humor when appropriate, illustrating points, having

students state some points of their own, being informative, acquainting them with something that they might not already know, using practice tests, minimizing memorization, and demonstrating meaning. Learning should be made to be a positive and pleasant experience (Proffit, 1998).

Additional strategies include: developing speaking skills and gestures, using voice modulation, avoiding monotone sounds, looking at each student when speaking in order to establish rapport, moving about the room when possible, using appropriate facial expressions and hand gestures, using gestures and movements with a purpose, showing passion for the subject, not fidgeting with papers or other objects, making use of smooth motions, and finally, being natural and relaxed (DDC, 1998-2008).

Michael Grinder, the National Director of NIP in Education, described a two versus three point communication system. He indicates that participants will usually look at the place where the presenter is looking. When eye contact is made, two people are involved in communication which is known as two-point communication. This type of contact increases emotion in the participants which may be either positive or negative.

Three-point communication occurs when a presenter looks at an object such as a chart instead of making eye contact. The participant's eyes will follow the presenter's eyes in the direction of the object. Since there is a third-point of eye direction, the strategy is known as three-point communication, resulting in a less personal exchange. Grinder (2009) further advises that if the interaction is positive, eye contact may be preferred. If the atmosphere is negative, a third point is favored. (Grinder, 2009).

It is imperative that a teacher knows and fully understands the subject being taught. It is probably even more important to know and understand the students both individually and collectively. In order to engage students, it is critical to come down to the students' level, but do

not fail to challenge them. If a teacher uses a word that might be unfamiliar, he or she must clarify the word, and make sure all instructions are clear. Educators should use pleasant tones, allow students to participate, and make the lesson interesting and even fun for students.

Lucas (2008) summarized techniques that can be useful in facilitating learning such as: icebreaker activities, games that are built around the subject being taught, engagement activities (individual and team) which employ hands-on learning, problem solving, memory recall and application to prior experiences. Many learning games, materials and ideas can be accessed on websites such as <http://www.apples4theteacher.com/math.html#geometrygames>. Old stand-by games such as bingo, word scrambles, spelling sparkle, and imagine may still be useful. The Smart Board is a relatively new addition to the classroom, a tool that offers a variety of learning games. Jeopardy is one example of a game that has been adapted for use with the Smart Board.

Applebaum Training institute provides additional ideas for cooperative games that can be used to teach while holding the students' attention. Students are helped by cooperative games when they realize the needs of the group are as important as their own personal needs. These games often aide the student with transfer of knowledge learned through the game to classroom activities (Applebaum, 2004). The first game recommended is called "Commonalities." In order for the students to play this game, they must first be divided into groups. Then four tasks are given to them: (1) each group must select a reporter, (2) five things that each member has in common with the other needs to be found, (3) a name for the group has to be agreed upon by every member of the group, and (4) when these tasks are completed, the group should sit down to signal that they are finished. Reporters relay the information that their group came up with to the entire class, and the step is repeated four times. No two groups may use the same commonalities, but all can retain their own group name (Applebaum, 2004). Some skills are

suggested in Applebaum's handbook for gaining students' attention: Be enthusiastic, move around when you teach, vary your voice tone, paint a story picture, make all learning relevant, ask interesting questions, and be dramatic (Applebaum, 2004).

When speaking to the class, teachers should remember that students are not only listening to them but looking at them. Therefore teachers should practice facial expressions and gestures before a mirror much as an actor would do. Other visual elements that may be included are pictures, photographs, and written words. For the tactile, hands-on learner, teachers might use material objects or art. Tools that can be utilized to hold students' attention are as far reaching as one's own imagination. Many ideas and teaching tools are also available on line, with some of them being free of charge.

Another useful strategy that can be used in a classroom is simulations which can be a training method for developing student interest while sharpening skills. Such techniques are commonly used by flight instructors.

Karen Debord is the extension specialist at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Debord (1989) recommends creative, participatory techniques. Debord advises educators that competition can be positive when no one is forced to be involved. Some games that may be used are Jeopardy, Win Lose or Draw, Blackjack, Dilemma and Corporate Planning. Game shows can be played like the TV games. An adaptation of Black Jack might use pictures to identify such as plants, animals, and street signs instead of numbers. The game of Dilemma requires students to work in teams in order to figure out creative solutions to dilemmas (Debord, 1989).

Rief and Heimburge (1996) suggest some other ways to peak students' interest. They include such activities as the use of jokes, riddles, tongue twisters, and comics (p. 266-272). Reif and Heimburge also list strategies for the motivation of spelling: "Pair movement with

practicing spelling words (clap to each letter, bounce ball yo-yo). Get creative. Tap out the sounds or syllables in words. Sing spelling words to common tunes/ melodies....” (p. 250).

Another way to hold students attention is to call on them at random. Reif and Heimburge (1996) suggest these methods for being fair and equal, “...write each student’s name on either a deck of cards or on tongue depressors (ice cream sticks). The cards or sticks are used to draw from when calling on students to answer questions” (p. 241). It is explained further that once a name is drawn that card or depressor is removed from the rest. Then at random, a name is picked from the ones that are already called to make sure that the students who have already answered questions don’t stop paying attention (Reif & Heimburge).

When Students Don’t Grasp the Subject

Often students experience the frustration of not understanding certain subject matter. Even though they are bright in some areas, they struggle with others. Some educators may call them lazy when their IQ tests are high but he or she has problems with reading, writing or math (Healey, 2010). Healy goes on to explain, “No one has a perfect brain. Most of us have some sort of “learning disability” or weakness, for which we learn to compensate by using our strong points” (p. 223).

Levine explains the results of students’ frustration,

When students are falsely accused of laziness, when problems are attributed glibly to poor attitudes, when children believe that they were “born to fail,” the result is a population of functionally crippled individuals, young persons who may then seek alternative, perhaps even antisocial and potentially self-destructive, pathways toward gratification. (Levine, 2002, p. 304)

Educators need to encourage students to self-monitor their behaviors. Some students

need help developing learning strategies. Students should be taught to talk to themselves about their problem behaviors. Self-Talk includes such things as naming the problem, making a plan, checking to see how they are doing, and seeing how they attend to the problem (Healey, 2010, p. 147-148).

Joyce and Weil (2004) list these general instructional strategies:

1. Informing the learner of the objectives
2. Presenting stimuli
3. Increasing learners' attention
4. Helping the learner recall what he or she has previously learned
5. Providing conditions that will evoke performance
6. Determining sequences of learning
7. Prompting and guiding the learning. (p. 392)

Reading difficulties. Graphic organizers may be useful for some students who have difficulties in reading. Reif and Heinburge (1996) list these aids: Framed outlines, Venn diagrams comparison charts, cluster maps, storyboards and others (p. 325).

Educators may use reading strategies other than the round robin method, such as choral reading. For example, each student would receive a copy of a poem which is read in unison. Levine explains choral reading. "Many children enjoy and can learn from choral and echo reading. In the latter case, a teacher reads aloud several sentences, then the children read the same sentences while pointing to the words. In choral reading, everyone reads in unison" (Levine, 2002, p. 197). Another strategy is Cloze reading in which the educator reads portions of the text but leaves out key words for the students to read together.

Educators need to be aware of students who have reading difficulties. Students may be

afraid of being humiliated by being asked to read out loud in front of other students. Educators should avoid situations that put a student in a humiliating situation (Reif & Heinburge, 1996, p. 319).

Mathematics. Mathematics is another area that some students find difficult. Levine (2002) lists difficulties students may experience:

Understanding the language of a word problem

Recalling math facts and/or processes

Attention to detail

Systematic problem solving

Mastering technical vocabulary

Understanding concepts

Holding the parts or steps of a problem in memory while working on it

Recognizing patterns in word problems or visual material. (p. 234)

Mathematics is another area where students have difficulties. There are many reasons for student's math disabilities (i.e., dyscalculia). Visual-spatial reasoning may be one factor. Healy (2010) explains this problem as, "a poor gut-level" understanding of quantity (Is 9 bigger than 7?)" (p. 12-13). Healy further explains that a language disorder may be another reason for dyscalculia. Some students may not understand such terms as 'equal to'. Poor physical or emotional health, the quality of the teaching students receive may also contribute to students' difficulties with math. Healy gives this tip, "Your child's math disability may be helped (or even prevented) by playing board or card games with her" (Healy, 2010, p.12-13). Such games help the student gain experience with quantities of tangible things.

Rief and Heimburge (1996) recommend some modifications to help students who have

problems with math. These include: steps need to be listed clearly, educators should make manipulatives available, the use of calculators needs to be encouraged, assignments should be cut in half, reference charts, facts and formulas need to be provided, and allow extra time for math tests (p.162).

Educators may use a more informal way to teach math with the use of math centers. Some math centers might include the: Graphing Center, Manipulative Center, Math Game Center, Restaurant Center, Card Center, Computer Center, Calculator Center, Math Art Center, and the Measurement Center (Rief & Heimburge, 1996, p. 367-368).

Summary

Reasons for students' misbehavior are as varied as the individual student. This literature review investigated some reasons for these behaviors and strategies teachers can use to manage them. Students with behavior disorders are more likely to be less prepared for life than other students. Elementary school is a challenge for many students, but for students with behavior disorders, school is sometimes overwhelming.

This literature review examined the most effective strategies for educators who deal with students with behavior disorders and described the students' support team. The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) team and their purpose was outlined, emphasizing the importance of the students' support team. The research of experts in the fields that deal with students with behavior disorders was reviewed and ways to understand students' problem behaviors were described. Topics that were clarified included: physical issues, emotional disturbances, learning disabilities, mood disorders, bipolar disorder, anxiety, panic disorders, reading difficulties, math disabilities, as well as other reasons why students may disrupt the classroom.

Ways to gain students' trust was discussed and reasons why that trust is important to educators was explained. Appropriate responses to disruptions in the classroom were recommended. How to hold students' attention was emphasized and strategies educators might do to help when students with behavior disorders who don't grasp the subject were suggested.

Methods

In order to define educators' views of effective approaches used with students with emotional and behavior disorders, surveys were sent to 60 teachers who teach/or have taught students with behavior and emotional disorders to discover their beliefs. The methods and procedures followed are described in the following sections.

Participants

Sixty teachers of students in kindergarten through the eighth grade who teach/or have taught students with behavior disorders were sent a 30-item survey questionnaire. All participants remained anonymous. All teachers were teaching/or have taught in a Southeastern school district in Appalachian Ohio.

Instrument

After completing a review of the literature and investigating similar surveys, a 30-item survey was created. Sixty surveys and consent forms were sent to teachers of grades K-8.

Survey questions included a few demographic questions to help describe the participants. To determine effectiveness of strategies, a rate scale from one to ten was used with one being the lowest and ten being the highest in terms of perceived effectiveness. Yes/No questions as well as open-ended questions were also included to determine teachers' opinions of the best teaching methods for students with behavior disorders.

The survey questions are included below:

- 1) What grade(s) do you teach?
- 2) Do you teach/have you taught students with behavior disorders?
- 3) How long have you been teaching?
- 4) How do you maintain students' attention during instruction?
- 5) Do you use humor when teaching?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

- 6) How effective do you believe humor is for holding student's attention?
- 7) Do you attempt to be entertaining to hold students' attention?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

- 8) How effective do you believe "being entertaining" is for holding students' attention?
- 9) Do you move around the class when possible to hold students' attention?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

- 10) How effective do you believe moving around is for holding students' attention?
- 11) What strategies do you believe to be the best methods for teaching reading to elementary students with behavior disorders?

- 12) Do you use graphic organizers when teaching reading to elementary students with behavior disorders?

Please rate the effectiveness of the following strategies for students with behavior disorders.

- 13) Framed Outlines
- 14) Venn Diagrams
- 15) Comparison Charts
- 16) Cluster Maps
- 17) Story boards

18) Do you use choral method reading to teach students with reading difficulties?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

19) How effective is choral reading for teaching students who have reading difficulties?

20) What methods do you believe to be best for teaching elementary students who have difficulties with math?

21) Do you use card and board games to teach students with math difficulties?

22) If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate. How effective are card and board games for teaching students with math difficulties?

23) Do you encourage students who have math difficulties to use calculators?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

24) How effective is the use of calculators when teaching students with math disabilities?

25) Do you cut assignments in half for students with math disabilities?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

26) How effective is cutting assignments in half?

27) Do you allow more time for students with math disabilities to finish tests?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

28) How effective is allowing more time for students with math disabilities?

29) Do you supply a quiet space for students who have math difficulties to work?

If yes, please give an example of when it would be appropriate.

30) How effective is a quiet space for students who have math disabilities?

Procedures

Informed consent and surveys were sent by email and/or the U.S. mail. The surveys were completed anonymously. Teachers provided passive consent by answering the surveys and

returning them to the researcher. Of the 60 surveys sent to teachers 18 were answered and returned to the researcher resulting in a 30% response rate.

Data Analysis

Survey responses included both qualitative and quantitative data. Means and ranges were calculated for each response that was rated from one to ten with one being the least desirable and ten being the most desirable. Also, the number of yes/no responses were totaled to determine how many teachers used each of the methods included in the questionnaire. Qualitative data was analyzed to determine what teachers believed to be the most appropriate reasons to use each approach. Quantitative data is presented in table form and qualitative data follows in narrative form.

Results

Survey results from all 18 participants are reported. The results demonstrate a variety of preferred strategies used and recommended by the participants. However, there was a great deal of unity among many of the strategies used by the participating teachers.

Evidence pertaining to the each of the participants' responses to each question is provided. Results are provided in tables except where a consensus was formed by teachers as is the case with questions numbers five and nine (i.e., the use of humor, and the use of proximity). Explanations as to when these approaches may be appropriate are provided.

Participants

All 18 teachers responded that they had or have taught students with behavior disorders at some point in their teaching career. Table 1 describes the number of participants by grades taught and number of years teaching.

Table 1

Participants

	Number of Responses
	(n)
<u>Grades Taught</u>	
Kindergarten	4
First grade	3
Second grade	4
Third grade	4
Fourth grade	5
Fifth grade	2
Sixth grade	2
Seventh grade	2
Eighth grade	8
<u>Years Teaching</u>	
1-5	0
5-10	3
10-15	5
15-20	1
20-25	4
25-30	5
30-35	2
35-40	1

Table 2 provides the results of participants' ratings of effectiveness for each of the strategies included in the survey, as gleaned from the literature.

Table 2

Mean Ratings for Effectiveness of Strategies

Strategy	Mean	Range	Mode
Quiet Space	8.8	(5, 20)	10
Allowing More Time	8.6	(5,10)	10
Using Humor	8.5	(5,10)	8
Use of Calculators	8.4	(5,10)	10
Moving around the Room	8.3	(1,10)	9
Framed Outlines	8.3	(1,10)	9
Story Boards	8.2	(6,10)	9
Being Entertaining	7.9	(6,10)	10
Choral Reading	7.5	(2,10)	10
Venn Diagrams	7.5	(1,10)	7
Card and Board Games	7.5	(2,10)	10
Cutting Assignments	6.6	(1,10)	10
Comparison Charts	6.4	(1,10)	7
Cluster Maps	6.4	(1,10)	5.7

Maintaining attention. Question number three was an open ended question that asked how each teacher maintained students' attention during instruction. One participant chose not to answer this question. Six of the participants believed that eye contact and movement about the room was important to maintain students' attention. Five participants listed verbal interaction as one of their strategies for sustaining students' attention. One participant felt that it was vital to

provide praise while showing concern and respect. Seven believed that hands on activities were important in keeping students' attention. One teacher believed that keeping instruction time short was helpful in maintaining students' attention. Two participants listed technology as one of their ways to hold students' attention. Two participants believed that it was imperative to make the material relevant to the students.

Use of humor. Question five asked if the participants used humor in their class room. All eighteen responded with a resounding 'yes.' Seven participants use humor when a student or students are uncomfortable or embarrassed. Five participants use humor to help students make a connection to the material. Three participants said that they use humor all of the time. One qualified this by adding that humor was used only when it wasn't going to hurt someone's feelings. Two explained that humor was used to motivate and encourage students. Two participants said that they used humor when they make a mistake or when things don't go as expected. Two believed that humor made material more interesting.

Entertaining students. Question seven asked if the participants attempt to be entertaining to hold students' attention. Sixteen answered yes and two answered with 'yes and no.' One participant that gave a yes/no answer said that he/she does not try to be entertaining during instruction as that was not his/her job. The teacher said that he/she tries to teach a point and expects the students to do their job to learn/internalize the point. However the yes was because he/she likes for it to be fun and for students to enjoy school. He/she added that he/she will lighten things up when he/she senses that it is needed.

Four participants responded that they used entertainment to hold students' attention. One mentioned that when students were tired, being entertaining helped them. Two participants used entertainment when explaining historical events. One response was he/she uses

entertainment to help students think outside the norm. When introducing a new concept was another time being entertaining was used. Two participants use entertainment when content is not solemn or it doesn't interfere with students' needs. One teacher said he/she is especially entertaining during read alouds and that he/she often play acts and reads with different voices. One participant said that entertainment was appropriate when doing demonstrations, having discussions, asking questions and critiquing work.

One teacher uses Pixar Short Films to help teach and introduce and review literary elements. Telling stories that relate to the material was another respondent's way of being entertaining. Another teacher reported giving these instructions to his/her class, "If you get a small scratch at recess, put a Band-Aid on it and go to class. If you're missing an arm, I need to know." Then he/she said, "After recess two boys came to me with arms out of sleeves and inside shirts, saying, "We're missing arms."

Moving around the room. Question nine asked if the participants moved around the room during instruction. All eighteen participants said that they did move around the room when it was appropriate. Participants were also asked when it was appropriate to move around the room. Eight participants said they move around the room when students are struggling or not paying attention. One said he/she moves around to look over shoulders and see if the students are following along or understand the material. Many of them move around to help students. Two teachers believe that moving is appropriate at all times. One teacher sets up his/her class so there is no front and back to the room. One moves around to have a vantage point from all areas of the room. One says that he/she moves around during discussion and direct instruction. Another participant said that moving around was appropriate when students had group discussions.

Reading strategies. The next question asked the teachers for the strategies that they believed to be the best methods for teaching reading to elementary students with behavior disorders. One participant answered that he/she believed high interest, high success, low stress, sight words, Computer programs such as “Quick Success,” and “Jump Start” are effective tools for teaching reading to elementary students with behavior disorders who have reading difficulties.

Three teachers believed that students’ should be allowed to choose books that interest them at their reading level. Another teacher sets goals that are student-initiated and monitored. He/she believes that encouragement and pointing out small improvements are imperative along with building on strengths. Three teachers use phonics and whole words when teaching reading. Seven participants say that they use small reading groups when teaching reading.

Graphic organizers and games. Question twelve asks if the teachers use graphic organizers when teaching reading. Three participants responded with no one answering N/A and fourteen responding ‘yes.’ The participants were asked if they used card and board games to teach math to students with math difficulties. Thirteen said ‘yes,’ three said ‘no’ and two said it was ‘not applicable.’

Math strategies. Teachers were asked to give what they believed to be the best methods for teaching math to students with math difficulties. Nine participants said that hands-on activities and manipulatives are effective for teaching students with math difficulties. One teacher said, “Teaching students cognitive strategies to help themselves with math is critical. Learning to read, visualize, estimate and compute are key.” Two teachers believed that it is important to check the students’ work to make sure they grasped the concepts. One respondent uses students as peer-teachers.

Four teachers reported using Smartboards and technology when they teach math to students who have math difficulties. Several say that repetition is necessary for teaching math. Another teacher mentioned the use of analogies to real life items as being important. Others cite conducting small group activities as being central to teaching students with math difficulties. Some teachers break down math concepts into smaller units or steps as a strategy for teaching math.

Summary

There was consensus among the respondents that a quiet space should be provided for elementary students with behavior disorders. The participants believe that the most effective strategy for teaching students with behavior disorders is to provide a quiet space. One teacher explained that, “Students with difficulties need absolute quiet with no distractions. With an improper environment these students will become frustrated and quit.”

The survey also demonstrated that teachers should use humor in the classroom. The researcher also favors using humor. Allowing more time for students who are having difficulties in math was also seen as important by the respondents. The use of calculators was recommended by thirteen of the teachers, however, three of the eighteen respondents frowned on their use and two said it didn’t apply to them. This researcher believes students should be allowed to check their work and correct it with calculators after the work is reviewed by the teacher.

Moving around the room during instruction was advocated by all eighteen participants. They believe this to be important for holding students’ attention. Sixteen of the participants entertained their students in the classroom. One teacher explained that she tried to entertain when doing demonstrations, asking questions, or critiquing work. Many teachers didn’t feel that entertaining was as important as other strategies for holding students’ attention.

Card and board games were low on the list of priorities. However one advocate of card and board games said, “Games provide a fun opportunity to practice skills. Games are always appropriate after a skill or strategy is taught to reinforce learning.”

Ten teachers said that they cut down on assignments, while five answered no and three said that it didn’t apply to them. Comparison charts were next to the least strategy recommended by participants. One teacher said, “Students respond best to visual and auditory cues. Kids with behavior disorders need to be visually engaged always. Graphic organizers provide the visual structure needed to bring order to their world.” Finally, the least recommended strategy by the participants for teaching students with behavior disorders was the use of cluster maps.

Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the best strategies for teaching elementary students with behavior disorders. The researcher believes that a providing a quiet space for students is imperative. Many of the respondents to this survey (8.8%) agreed that a quiet space is important. Additionally, the effectiveness of utilization of a quiet space was judged to be 10 on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most effective and 1 being the least effective.

The results from the survey also indicated that a teacher using humor in the classroom is essential. Interestingly, 8.5% of the participants used humor in their classroom ranking it 10 for effectiveness as a tool to maintaining students’ attention.

The hypothesis was that there are certain strategies that work best for teaching students with behavior disorders. The strategies identified in the literature were confirmed by the teachers in response to the survey items to some degree or another.

Allowing more time for students who have behavior disorders is recommended based on the review of the literature and the findings in this study. The results also demonstrate that

providing a quiet space is extremely important and that using humor in the classroom is desirable.

This research shows that a dynamic classroom atmosphere is conducive to a good learning environment, while accommodations should be made for disruptive students and students with behavior disorders as well as students who are having learning difficulties .

Implications for Practice

The implications of this study demonstrate the need for the careful use of a variety of strategies keeping in mind the variety of students in the classroom, including students with behavior disorders. Respect for the students and a quiet, yet energetic environment should be considered by educators as well as the IEP team and supporting staff when planning the best placement for students with behavior disorders.

Further research might contemplate the use of a larger sample which would permit a more detailed analysis that could be generalized to a larger group. With such a small sample, this study was only able to determine trends in teaching strategies in one school district of a Midwestern state.

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