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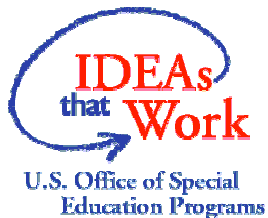
## EMSTAC Extra

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### Answering the question...

*What strategies can education professionals use to facilitate the reintegration of students with emotional or behavioral disorders into their classrooms?*



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## ***EMSTAC Extra***

### **Strategies to Assist in the Reintegration of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbance into the General Education Classroom**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As an increasing number of students with emotional and behavioral disturbance (EBD) are integrated into general education classrooms, teachers, administrators and other education staff are seeking information about programs and strategies to assist this group of students (Reitz, 1994). The intent of this *EMSTAC Extra* is to provide suggestions based on a review of research literature and other resources on how general and special educators can work together to facilitate the reintegration of EBD students in the general education classroom.

#### **PREPARATION: BEFORE THE STUDENT IS PLACED IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM**

It is important for there to be collaboration between the special education teacher and the general education teacher in preparing the student, teachers and classrooms for the reintegration process. General and special educators can work together to ensure that the following four-step process takes place prior to the students change of placement (Fuchs et. al., 2001; Reiz 1994):

##### **1) Consider Student Characteristics**

Decisions regarding re-integration or inclusion should be made on an individual basis and should consider particular student characteristics. Students who have at least average or just below average academic skills may be strong candidates for placement in general education. Many students with emotional and behavioral difficulties have good academic skills but their use and development of these skills is stunted by their behavior. The frequency and type of behavioral difficulty that a student experiences is also important to consider. Students who exhibit difficulties on a relatively infrequent basis and/or who have demonstrated some desire for teacher approval and attention may be good candidates.

##### **2) Conduct an Environmental Assessment**

It is recommended that staff assess the skills that the student will need to succeed in the new classroom/environment. The receiving teacher should be directly interviewed to determine these skills. This assessment should include observations of the classroom, and other environments the student is expected to frequent such as the gym, the homeroom, or the cafeteria. It is important that these skills be identified as early as possible so that they can be taught and reinforced throughout the student's tenure in a more restrictive environment.

##### **3) Prepare the Student for Reintegration**

The special education teacher/class should try to provide the student with opportunities to practice the skills needed for the new environment. Self-monitoring/management skills and "teacher pleasing" skills can be important in ensuring greater success once students are re-integrated. Self-monitoring skills are those that allow a child to periodically make a determination as to whether he/she is behaving in a way consistent with classroom rules and expectations. The accuracy with which these students monitor their own behavior can be enhanced when teachers cross check the student's ratings with ratings that are kept by the teacher. "Teacher pleasing" skills are those that will elicit a positive social response from teachers. Examples of these skills include: hand raising, asking permission, providing compliments to others, and working cooperatively with peers.

Additionally if there are special classroom procedures or policies that will be expected of the student in the general education classroom, the general and special education teachers can work together to ensure that these skills are learned prior to the change in placement.

**4) Promote the Transfer Across Settings**

As students develop the skills they need to be successful in less restrictive environments, efforts should be made to ensure that these skills will actually be used by the students in the new environment. One way to do this is to gradually increase the similarity between expectations in the alternative placement and expectations in the new classroom. This can be done by instituting a “level” system in the alternative classroom in which school privileges, frequency of reinforcement, classroom assignments, behavioral expectations, and daily routines at the “highest level” mirror those in the new classroom. However it is very important that students and teachers alike understand that once a student reaches the “highest level”, and is able to maintain their behavior for a specified period of time (e.g. number of days or weeks), the student will be re-integrated. Once the student is placed in the new classroom it is likely that prompts and cues will need to be used by the general education teacher to ensure that the student maintains expected social-behavioral and academic skills. Examples of these cues might include non-verbal gestures (e.g., hand signal), token (e.g., a pass or some type of concrete item), signs (e.g., posting of rules) and/or actual persons (e.g., student aide). Further, the special and general educators may want to work together to make adaptations for the student in the general education classroom. These adaptations/accommodations may include modifications to exams, the use of a peer-tutor, and training of a peer buddy to assist the student with social integration upon his/her placement in the new setting.

**5) Gradually Reintroduce the Student into the New Setting**

The team may want to consider a gradual introduction to the general education classroom for the student and provide monitored opportunities for the student to try out the general education classroom with support from the alternative classroom during the transition. This gradual introduction is important because it will allow the student the opportunity to face new challenges and pressures and to use newly learned skills while retaining familiar supports and the safety to retreat if necessary.

**SUGGESTIONS FROM THE LITERATURE**

A review of literature regarding the reintegration of students with behavioral disabilities yielded a number of strategies to assist teachers with managing challenging behaviors in the general education setting (Reitz, 1994). As with any practice, these recommendations should be considered relative to the unique characteristics of the student and setting.

- **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:** Challenging and stimulating academic work that actively involves the student can result in fewer behavioral problems. Instructional strategies to enhance engagement with the material may include but are not limited to direct instruction, peer tutoring, or cooperative learning.
- **SOCIAL REINFORCEMENT:** Social reinforcement and token/point systems in which points are given for desirable behavior and taken away for undesirable behavior can provide a framework for promoting good behaviors.
- **RESPONDING TO EARLY CUES:** Responding quickly to mildly disruptive behavior is important. Researchers have found that aggressive behaviors often occur after a long chain of behaviors. If teachers can be cued into the early, mildly disruptive behavior and intervene with strategies such as redirection, verbal prompts, or specific instruction, it may help to avoid minor problems from escalating.

- **TIME OUT:** Time out, a strategy for reducing inappropriate behavior in which the student is denied access, for a fixed period of time, to the opportunity to receive reinforcement (Kerr and Nelson, 1998), can be an effective tool in reducing disruptive behaviors. However, it can become ineffective if misused/overused.
- **CRISIS INTERVENTION PLAN:** Teachers should have a crisis intervention plan in place in the rare occurrence of a dangerously aggressive behavior. Staff should be trained in crisis intervention and/or passive physical restraint.
- **INCREASING POSITIVE PEER INTERACTIONS:** Cooperative learning and peer tutoring provide opportunities for students to have positive, structured interactions with peers as well as increasing their engagement in the curriculum.
- **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:** Family participation in any setting serves to reinforce the educational experience.

### THE USE OF A PLANNING MATRIX

A planning matrix is a system that an educator can use to keep track of a student’s IEP objectives, their class schedule and environments, and when and where supports or modifications are needed (Benninghof and Singer, 1995). A planning matrix can also help a teacher incorporate components of a student’s IEP into their teaching practices and thereby help the student succeed in the general education setting. General and special educators can develop a planning matrix that is aligned with the student’s learning and behavioral goals. The following steps can be used to develop a planning matrix:

- 1) List the IEP objectives in the left-hand column.
- 2) In the top row, list the periods/activities including arrival, lunch, recess, etc. of the regular school day.
- 3) In collaboration with the IEP team, shade the boxes of the activity(ies) in which the IEP objective could be addressed. Continue going across each row until each objective will be addressed during the day.
- 4) The matrix can also be used to indicate where the student may need additional assistance other than what the classroom teacher can provide, e.g., an aide or peer assistance (Benninghof and Singer, 1995) as well as other planning needs.

<b>Example of a Planning Matrix</b>						
<b>IEP</b>	<b>Class Activities/Periods</b>					
	Arrival	English	History	Recess	Science	Art
Keep hands to self						
Work in a small group when appropriate						
Increase attention to the teacher						
Remain in his/her seat at appropriate times						

**\*\*This matrix was adapted from the book, *IDEAS for Inclusion: The Classroom Teachers' Guide to Integrating Students with Disabilities*, by Anne M. Benninghof and Anne L. Singer (1995).**

**CHECKLIST FOR FACILITATING THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION SETTING (Benninghof and Singer, 1995):**

- Inclusion and/or reintegration in the general education setting should be recognized as a possibility and viewed as an important goal by staff and students.
- Teacher/new staff should go visit the child in his or her current placement. This should begin several weeks prior to integration.
- Assess expectations and demands of the receiving environment.
- Implement interventions in the special education or alternative classroom to ensure that the student has developed the skills necessary to be successful. Choose interventions that may be easily adapted or modified for use in the general education classroom.
- Arrange for the student to visit the new classroom several times before the change of placement.
- Gradually align expectations and responsibilities between the current classroom and the new classroom.
- Provide opportunities for new and current staff to discuss the student.
- Establish a weekly plan that addresses IEP objectives. Establish a planning matrix or some other organizing system that enables a teacher to determine when and how IEP objectives will be met.
- Coordinate any related services in advance.
- Provide necessary professional development for general education teachers.
- Set up a communication system between necessary parties (e.g., home-school, current-new teacher).
- Meet the family prior to the placement.

**RESOURCES**

**KidTools** is a CD-ROM designed for students with emotional and behavioral disturbance and their teachers. It contains resources and worksheets for students and educators including tools for self-monitoring, time management, study skills, and organizational skills. KidTools was produced by an Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded Center at the University of Missouri called VRCBD, the Virtual Resource Center for Behavioral Disorders. For more information visit the VRCBD Website at <http://www.coe.missouri.edu/vrcbd/projres1.shtml>.

**CECP, The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice** has developed several products pertaining to best practices in teaching students with behavioral problems. Visit the following websites for more information:

[http://www.air.org/cecp/new\\_products.htm](http://www.air.org/cecp/new_products.htm)

<http://www.air.org/cecp/resources/success/best.htm>

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