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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses issues related to placement of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders and training of teachers who provide special education services for these students, particularly in rural areas. A survey of 68 special education directors and 43 teachers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders in rural South Carolina examined attitudes about placement options, training requirements, need for collaboration among school districts, and regular classroom adjustments. For the most part, directors of special education favored placement in a resource room for students with emotional disabilities, while teachers tended to favor the self-contained model. Administrators were somewhat more favorable toward a modicum of integration for students with emotional disabilities than were teachers. Teachers and directors were very much opposed to full inclusion for these students. Directors and teachers agreed that more training is needed for those who serve students with emotional disabilities, and that special education cooperatives may be a way to provide services for students with emotional disabilities in those districts with few students. (KS)

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SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS AND STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES AND BEHAVIOR DISORDERS: A RURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Placement decisions concerning students with disabilities often hinge on the availability of qualified personnel. Despite the best efforts of many administrators to hire teachers with the proper certification, positions are often filled by individuals who are not certified or in some cases not filled at all. School districts must resort to a variety of alternatives to ensure that students' rights to an appropriate education are not violated. Because of questions which arise concerning personnel qualifications or placement decisions, "appropriate education" is often left open to debate. The difficulty in making appropriate placement decisions is compounded by issues such as lack of qualified personnel or low numbers of students. This is certainly a problem when we consider the educational decisions made for students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders. Although shortages of qualified personnel are widespread, the problem is much more prevalent and longer lived in rural school districts.

Rural school districts are often faced with low numbers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders as well as a rather small pool of qualified applicants for teaching positions. Also, because of limited numbers of students, administrators are reluctant to commit funds to facilities designed to meet the specific needs of this population. These factors contribute to a situation which often stretches the resourcefulness of IEP teams in making placement and curriculum decisions. Placement decisions are often made, not on the basis of the student's educational need, but on the extent to which the available options approximate an appropriate placement. Students with serious emotional disabilities or behavior disorders are found in "generic" resource classrooms in which the teacher may have little or no training in working with this population. Administrators in rural districts try to solve the problem of appropriate placement for these students by resorting to the use of placement options which they believe to be a reasonable approximation of the needed service delivery model. Also, teachers are often hired "out of field" on "emergency" or temporary certificates to work with these students.

Teacher training programs are faced with students who have several years of experience in the field, but little or no formal training or solid theoretical foundation. Despite the teacher shortages faced by many rural districts, teacher training programs continue to use categorical organizational plans or to focus on generic plans which emphasize mild disabilities. The dilemma faced by these students as they enter the teaching field

is that they may be placed in a generic classroom in which the district has chosen to describe as being for all disabilities. Because the teacher lacks skills needed for the specialized needs of certain disability areas, success as a teacher may be an illusive goal. The results for students with serious emotional disabilities or behavior disorders are placements in situations which put them at risk for making educational progress.

The need for qualified teachers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders is certainly at a crisis stage in many rural districts. Random reports from teachers and administrators paint a grim picture of students receiving inappropriate or no services. News stories of physical abuse by teachers add to the sense of panic which many district officials feel. Simply looking at numbers of identified students and certified teachers does not tell the whole story. A need exists for an analysis of the service delivery options in place in rural districts for students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders. To prepare teachers for the reality of special education in rural districts, teacher training programs must work with state departments of education and school districts in determining the best options for serving this population and assessing the skills needed by teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to: examine the service delivery models being used in rural school districts to educate students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders; examine the need for teachers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders in rural districts; determine the attitudes of rural directors of special education and teachers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders relative to placement options and teacher training requirements. The extent to which director and teacher attitudes impact on the nature or effectiveness of service delivery will also be examined.

Review of literature

Placement decisions concerning students with disabilities often hinge on the availability of qualified personnel (Bacon, 1988; Connery, 1988; Brassard & Barnes, 1987). Despite the best efforts of many administrators in rural districts to effectively serve students with emotional handicaps or behavior disorders, these students continue to be unserved or underserved (Connery, 1988). School districts must resort to a variety of alternatives to ensure that students' rights to an appropriate education are not violated (Upper Midwest Regional Resource Center, 1981).

As noted by Peterson and Maddux (1988), rural school districts often have difficulty providing special education services in the areas of funding, recruitment, retention, transportation, and staff development. Bacon (1988), suggests

that the low incidence of behavior disorders in rural districts is a factor in decisions to provide reduced services or to not provide teachers who specialize in behavior disorders. Lingo and Henry (1990) discuss the need for coordination of related services for students with behavior disorders in rural schools. Limited resources may require the designation of a faculty member to take on the responsibility of coordinator of services for students with behavior disorders. Given the limited availability of faculty trained in the area of emotional disabilities or behavior disorders, such a plan could be difficult to implement in many districts.

In a study of rural special education services, Beare (1986) arrived at the conclusion that cross-categorical teacher training and licensure were more appropriate for improving services for students with mild disabilities than relying upon categorical resource rooms. Joyce and Wienke (1988) relate problems in adequately serving children with behavior disorders in rural areas to the inability of universities and colleges to provide teacher training which meets the myriad of diversity found in the many different rural communities across the country. Their recommendation is that training must focus on the specific needs of rural school districts. Brownell and Smith (1992) discussed the high attrition rates in special education and their effects on the provision of quality services for special needs students. They also point out crisis conditions exist due to "greater teacher shortages and decreased preservice enrollments in special education. Thompson (1992) has noted the "confusion" which exists among regular classroom teachers relative to the needs of students designated as learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, and educable mentally handicapped. The need for inservice to ameliorate this confusion is indicative of the lack of training which exists among teachers outside of special education. Given the practice of utilizing "temporary", "emergency", or "out-of-field" certificates to employ teachers lacking training in special education, the notion of teachers "confused" about the needs of a particular disability area are indeed disconcerting.

Joyce and Wienke (1988) found that faculty at teacher training institutions and teachers in the field are in agreement concerning the competencies needed to teach students with behavior disorders. Heller, Spooner, Spooner, and Algozzine (1992) suggest that efforts to integrate special education students into regular classrooms will only work if teacher training programs utilize "an intensive, structured, planned, and applied program incorporating special education principles into the preparation of general education teachers." Rural school districts are indeed vulnerable, given the limited availability of trained teachers and the limited knowledge base of the general education faculty. The lack of qualified personnel indeed intensifies the difficulty in making appropriate placement decisions concerning students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders.

The current move toward more inclusive educational arrangements might, on the surface, seem like a possible solution to the problem of limited resources faced by rural districts. Inclusive special education programs have been described as options which more adequately prepare students for community involvement (Stainback & Stainback, 1992; and Gaylord-Ross, 1989). Questions surrounding the inclusion of students with behavior disorders, particularly those with aggressive behaviors, may not be easily settled. The issue of moving students into the mainstream of educational life has been a part of the current special education scene for some time, however, it has intensified in recent years, particularly in relation to students with moderate to profound disabilities. Inclusion options must now be considered as part of the continuum of services when discussing the education of students with behavior disorders. How well rural districts are able to provide inclusive arrangements will depend largely on the availability of adequate resources, trained faculty, and favorable attitudes toward the implementation of inclusion models.

The present study addresses issues related to placement of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders and training of teachers who provide special education services for these students. Directors of special education and teachers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders were examined. The purpose of this study was to determine the nature of attitudes of Directors and teachers relative to placement options and need for training. Specifically, we were trying to determine if particular placement options were favored over others and whether participants had differing attitudes relative to the training needs of teachers of this population.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were members of two groups of special educators. The first group consisted of the special education directors of districts designated as rural by the state legislature (N = 68). Rural districts in South Carolina are defined as those comprised of 50% or more rural population. The second group consisted of one teacher from each rural district employing teachers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders (N = 43).

The entire population of South Carolina Directors of Special Education in rural school districts were surveyed. A participation rate of 85.29% was attained from these directors. Teachers were selected at random from those district employing teachers of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders. For the teachers, a 72% response rate was attained.

Teacher Questionnaire

The Teacher questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I was comprised of 12 items designed to gather background information about the participants. Questions related to number of years of experience, certification, teaching responsibilities, service delivery model, number of students served daily, and on going training. Part II consisted of a 16 item Likert-type survey designed to ascertain attitudes relative to placement options, training requirements, need for collaboration among school districts, and regular classroom adjustments.

The Director questionnaire consisted of one part. The questionnaire was a duplicate of that used in Part II of the Teacher survey.

Results

Findings were organized into 4 categories: teacher background; service delivery options; certification or training requirements; and inter-district collaboration. For questions on the Director questionnaire and Part II of the Teacher questionnaire, single item chi-square analyses were conducted for each item to determine the significance of the frequency distribution. Data were organized into a 2 X 1 table omitting the neutral cell and collapsing the strongly agree and agree cells into one agree cell and collapsing the strongly disagree and disagree cells into one disagree cell (see Table 1). The teacher background information was examined and reported as percentages of total responses.

Teacher Background

Of the teachers responding to the questionnaire, 48.4% had 11 or more years of special education experience. Experience of more than 10 years teaching students with emotional disabilities was reported by 25.8% of the respondents. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were certified in the area of emotional disabilities. All respondents were officially listed as a teacher of students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders. Masters degrees were held by 54.8% of the respondents. Self-contained classrooms were indicated as the service delivery model utilized by 71% of the respondents. None of the respondents indicated resource room as the model utilized, and only 16% indicated use of the itinerant model. One respondent indicated that they were involved in the use of an inclusion model for delivery of services. Teachers serving over 10 students with emotional disabilities each day was 19%.

Service Delivery Options

Teachers and Directors were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements concerning placement options for students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders.

Each of the first four items indicated that students with emotional disabilities were best served by a particular service delivery model. Of the Directors responding to the first item, 19.23% indicated that they agreed that these students are best served by the itinerant model. Of those responding, 48.07% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 9.89, p < .01$. Teachers' responses were 16.2% and 56.7% respectively, $X^2 (1) = 8.79, p < .01$. Directors' responses related to agreement or disagreement with the use of the self-contained model were 28.8% agree and 40.4% disagree, $X^2 (1) = 5.61, p < .05$. Teachers' responses were 48.6% agree and 24.3% disagree, $X^2 (1) = 4.9, p < .05$. Director's responses concerning the use of the resource room model were 38.5% agree and 17.3% disagree, $X^2 (1) = 12.49, p < .001$. Of the teachers responding, 19% agreed and 35% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 8.78, p < .01$. Those Directors agreeing with the use of the full inclusion model as the best choice measured 17%. Of those responding, 45% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 11.79, p < .001$.

In response to the statement concerning whether students with emotional handicaps should be excluded from regular classroom until their behavior is brought under control, 44% of Directors agreed and 40% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 1.49, n.s.$ Of the teachers responding, 57% agreed and 32% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 2.62, n.s.$ In response to the statement that aggressive emotionally handicapped students should not be allowed to participate in regular class activities, 40% of Directors agreed and 48% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 1.27, n.s.$ Of the teachers responding, 54% agreed and 41% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = .78, n.s.$ Of the Directors responding to the statement suggesting that students with emotional handicaps should spend 100% of the school day in the regular classroom regardless of the severity of their disability, 3.5% agreed and 95% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 47.41, p < .001$. For teachers, the breakdown was 2.7% agree and 97.3% disagree, $X^2 (1) = 33.1, p < .001$.

Certification or Training

Directors and Teachers were asked to respond to five statements relating to the certification and training required to teach students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders. The first item stated that teachers of students with emotional handicaps should be fully certified as a teacher of the emotionally handicapped prior to teaching these students. Of the Directors responding, 64% agreed and 28% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 8.04, p < .01$. Of the Teachers responding, 62% agreed and 16% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 9.54, p < .01$. In response to the statement of whether teachers certified in other areas of special education should be able to teach students with emotional disabilities without additional training, the percentage of Directors who agreed was 7% and the percentage who disagreed was 95%, $X^2 (1) = 25.70, p < .001$. For those teachers responding, 11% agreed and 70% disagreed, $X^2 (1) = 14.4, p < .001$. In response to the statement of whether teachers with no special education

background should be allowed to teach in EH classrooms if they attend workshops, 5% of Directors agreed and 79% disagreed, $X^2(1) = 32.37$, $p < .001$. For teachers, 11% agreed and 76% disagreed $X^2(1) = 16.25$, $p < .001$.

Inter-district Collaboration

Directors of special education agreed (67%) that rural school districts with few students with EH should form special education cooperatives with other school districts, $X^2(1) = 20.14$, $p < .001$. Despite their concerns about limited resources, however, they very much disagreed with the statement that districts with limited resources should not be required to serve students with emotional disabilities (88%), $X^2(1) = 40.00$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

As we move toward the twenty-first century, we are rethinking our ideas relative to the way we serve students with disabilities. In addition to the basic concept of mainstreaming, in recent times educators have been confronted with the Regular Education Initiative and full inclusion of students with more severe disabilities or with behaviors difficult to manage in regular classroom situations. Despite efforts by educational leaders to bring about change, success is often limited by the lack of enthusiasm among the rank and file educators. If concepts such as full inclusion or the Regular Education Initiative are to work, teachers and administrators must be prepared to objectively consider the merits of these concepts.

This study attempted to determine how administrators and teachers feel about placement and certification issues. Both of these issues are important to the successful delivery of services to students with emotional disabilities who reside in rural school districts. Because rural districts so often lack resources, or do not have enough students to hire a person trained in the area of behavior disorders, students with emotional disabilities run the risk of receiving less than adequate intervention. By surveying Directors, we were able to ascertain how those who have some input into personnel decision making feel about issues related to the amount of training one needs to serve students with emotional disabilities.

Our research has indicated that, for the most part, Directors of special education generally favor placement in a resource room for students with emotional disabilities. In contrast, teachers tended to favor the use of the self-contained model. It should be noted, that the majority of the teachers who responded served in self-contained classrooms. It would seem that administrators are somewhat more favorable toward a modicum of integration for students with emotional disabilities than teachers. This difference may need to be addressed as we rethink

the general structure of special education and the method of service delivery most effective for this population.

Teachers and Directors are very much opposed to the use of full inclusion for students with emotional disabilities. They also tend to favor a more gradual integration for this population as opposed to total inclusion. This is especially true for those students regarded as aggressive.

Directors and Teachers feel that more training is needed by those who serve students with emotional disabilities. This is especially important given the difficulty encountered by many rural districts in finding certified personnel for vacant positions. It should be noted, that several respondents indicated that this is the ideal and not the reality. Thus, while they recognize that teachers should be fully certified prior to working with students with emotional disabilities, they still are willing to hire those who do not meet this criteria, as indicated by their response to the statements related to training. This feeling was shared by the teachers who responded to the survey. These findings indicate that administrators will continue to utilize those who are not fully certified and teachers will be willing to take positions for which they are not fully trained. These findings have strong implications for the future educational needs of rural students with emotional disabilities.

Finally, it appears that administrators and teachers recognize the need to address limited resources in rural school districts. Both groups of respondents felt that special education cooperatives might be a way to provide services for students with emotional disabilities in those districts with few students. Such attitudes indicate a willingness to consider options which go beyond the utilization of out-of-field personnel. Such cooperatives have been tried in several states as a means of bringing special education services to those districts with few students. The fact that 67% of the special education directors in South Carolina's rural school districts favor the formation of cooperatives is an indication that they recognize the severity of the need for qualified personnel to serve students with emotional disabilities or behavior disorders.

This study has opened the door to the examination of the attitudes of those who serve students with emotional disabilities in rural school districts. The issues addressed should assist educators to better understand the extent to which change is possible and the likelihood that the rank and file educator will support those changes. Although several respondents to our survey suggested that one cannot generalize about students with emotional disabilities, the vast majority of Directors and teachers were willing to respond specifically to the survey. It is apparent that administrators and teachers have opinions concerning appropriate placement and are willing to express these opinions without qualification. Such a willingness could serve

as somewhat of a barrier as we enter an era in which traditional placement options are being reconsidered.

The need for a well trained corps of teachers to serve students with emotional disabilities is great. The willingness of educators to lower standards in order to provide services is of great concern. The resistance to inclusion and limited pool of qualified teachers may prove to be a problem as rural districts strive to keep pace with the mainstream of the educational process.

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Table 1: Rural Special Education Services for students with emotional disabilities: Agreement and Disagreement.

		A	D
1.	Students with emotional handicaps are best served by using an itinerant model.		
	Directors	% 19.23	48.08
	Teachers	% 16.22	56.76
2.	Students with emotional handicaps are best served in a self-contained classroom.		
	Directors	% 28.85	40.38
	Teachers	% 48.65	24.32
3.	Students with emotional handicaps are best served in a resource room.		
	Directors	% 38.46	17.31
	Teachers	% 18.92	35.14
4.	Students with emotional handicaps are best served using a full inclusion model.		
	Directors	% 16.98	45.3
	Teachers	% 10.81	54.05
5.	Students with emotional handicaps should be excluded from the regular classroom until their behavior is brought under control.		
	Directors	% 38.25	40.35
	Teachers	% 56.76	32.43
6.	Students with emotional handicaps should be gradually phased into mainstream classes when they are ready to participate.		
	Directors	% 85.97	7.01
	Teachers	% 91.89	8.11
7.	Aggressive emotionally handicapped students should not be allowed to participate in regular class activities.		
	Directors	% 39.66	48.27
	Teachers	% 54.05	40.54
8.	Students with emotional handicaps should spend 100% of the school day in the regular classroom regardless of the severity of their disability.		
	Directors	% 3.51	94.74
	Teachers	% 2.70	97.3
9.	Teachers of students with emotional handicaps should be fully certified as a teacher of the emotionally handicapped prior to teaching this population.		
	Directors	% 63.79	27.59
	Teachers	% 62.16	16.22

Table 1 continued.

10.	Teachers with a special education background in an area(s) other than EH should be allowed to teach in EH classrooms without additional training.	Directors	%	7.02	70.17
		Teachers	%	10.82	70.27
11.	Teachers with a special education background in an area(s) other than EH/ should be allowed to teach in EH classrooms while completing additional training.	Directors	%	59.65	14.03
		Teachers	%	59.46	18.92
12.	Teachers with no special education background should be allowed to teach in EH classrooms if they attend workshops.	Directors	%	5.26	78.95
		Teachers	%	10.82	75.68
13.	Teachers with no special education background should be allowed to teach in EH classrooms if they begin the process for completing EH certification.	Directors	%	24.14	53.45
		Teachers	%	24.32	54.05
14.	Rural school districts with few students with EH should form special education cooperatives with other school districts.	Directors	%	67.24	12.07
		Teachers	%	67.57	18.92
15.	Rural school districts with limited resources should not be required to serve students with emotional handicaps.	Directors	%	5.17	87.93
		Teachers	%	16.22	75.66
16.	The number of students in regular education classrooms should be reduced if a student with emotional handicaps is placed in the classroom.	Directors	%	67.29	18.96
		Teachers	%	75.66	5.41