Dealing with Behavior Disorders

Online as well as in the traditional classroom, schools encounter students with behavior disorders. Schools must be prepared to manage these behavior issues. Behavior disorders range from ADHD, anxiety, hyperactive, depression, fear, etc... According to an article titled *Behavior and Emotional Disorders in Special Education,* behavior issues "are characterized by one or more of the following:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- An inability to create or sustain reciprocal relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings in typical situations or environments.
- A pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- Frequent occurrences of physical symptoms or fears attached to personal or school problems".

Behavioral Disorders: Background and Understanding

"Behavioral and emotional disorders fall under the rubric of "Emotional Disturbance," "Emotional Support," "Severely Emotionally Challenged," or other state designations. "Emotional Disturbance" is the descriptive designation for behavioral and emotional disorders in the Federal Law" was quoted by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Jerry Webster's article "Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Special Education."

There are many things to consider if you are a novice online teacher while teaching a student with a behavior disturbance. Handling behavior disturbances online is harder than in person because you cannot see the student's reactions to situations. Understanding what types of behavioral disturbances there are and which type your student has will play a major role in a successful environment and program of study.

First and foremost, you should look for an IEP (Individualized Education Program/Plan). Some students will already have them but in the case that they don't you will need to set up a time with a specialist to determine if one is needed and how in depth the IEP should be. You can access any state's department of education website but a quick glance at one is DESE (Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) . This contains the laws and regulations, forms, transitions, aides for private and homeschooling, and also program monitoring and improvement planning for students in need of an IEP.

When you know the specific behavior disorder it is necessary to get as much information on the disorder so that lesson planning and teaching is optimized. Students with behavior disorders become easily frustrated and will lose focus if the lessons aren't adapted to fit their needs.   Teachers will need to collaborate closely with parents to fulfill planning lessons.

Parents will know how to adequately handle situations if a child starts misbehaving and can keep the teacher informed of the student's progress or recession.

A great medical site is [Local Health](#) . This site explains a lot of behavioral disorders, symptoms, causes, and treatments. If you are questioning a child's behavior and need a guide to follow start there first. Obtain school work, notes, and other details that would be pertinent in determining the needs of a student. Discuss the information with the school district, counselor, and principal to determine what steps to take next.

There are a variety of Behavior and Emotional Disabilities that a student may experience. Like many disabilities and individuals, each child may act differently depending on the situation. Possible Behavior or Emotional Disabilities Include:
- Anxiety Disorders
  - Panic Disorder
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Separation Anxiety
  - Phobias
- Impulse-Control Disorder
  - Kleptomania (Stealing)
  - Pyromania (Fire-Starting)
  - Intermittent Explosive Disorder
- Personality Disorders
  - Depression
  - Obsessive Behavior (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)
  - Schizophrenia

Online Learning Issues of Behavior Disorders

Behavior disorders can negatively impact students learning experience and create management issues with technology, curriculum, parents, peers and the student.

Behavior disorders affect the manner in which the students use technology. Technology should be tailored to student's user level. Technology used by the conventional student may impact the learning experience of a student with a disability differently. The attention span of a student with a behavior disorder may not allow them to operate technology with the average patience. An angry student could possibly do harm to self, teacher, peers, and equipment. These events usually result in the student's inability to achieve positive learning outcome.

The average online curriculum is not designed to meet the needs of students with behavior disorders. Student with behavior disorders need curriculum that is tailored to their needs. Curriculum that lacks interactivity may induce boredom and created inattentiveness. Curriculum that is lengthy and does not provide periodic breaks may also create discomfort for the students.

In most cases parents know the student better than anyone. But do they really understand behavior disorders? Has some form of intervention been explored by the family? In some cases this may be an issue. Uneducated parents may lack knowledge and resources. Working couples may lack time to give the attention desired by the student. Other household issues may exasperate the student's emotions or behavior.

Peers may be distracted in their online environment by students displaying emotional or physical behaviors detrimental to achieving the learning objectives. In some cases, online testing is conducting at a central location. Students that are not disciplined to test around or with others may draw other student into discussions, create distractions, or even become confrontational during testing. The majority of online learning is done in asynchronous or synchronous settings. Unruly comments on discussion boards or chats, disruptive behavior during synchronous sessions, and/or lack of communication can alter or destroy a positive learning experience. This can all be very stressful for an inexperienced teacher.

The student and the teacher are nucleus of the discussion on managing behavior disorders. The teacher has to be capable of dealing with behavior disorders. It is imperative that the teacher is qualified to manage the online experience and the student. Without proper certifications and qualifications the teacher may not be able to identify the student's behavior disorder. The teacher must be experienced at selecting the correct intervention. How will the teacher's management of the students behavior disorder impact the learning outcome?

Possible Solutions

Behavior Disorders can come in many ways and each individual student needs to be treated as such, an individual. The most important point to understand when working with individuals with behavior disabilities, is to read the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Most of the time, included in the IEP will be a behavior intervention plan (BIP). A BIP will include the problem behaviors already observed by other individuals, most likely other teachers and parents, and possible ways to accommodate the student so that the behaviors do not occur. In addition, there will be instructions for how to react or act after a student exhibits a behavior that may not be appropriate in the classroom, both virtual or in a traditional classroom.

One of the most important ways to ensure less behavior in your classroom, is to determine triggers or antecedents, things that occur before the problem behavior, for the students behaviors. If a teacher has determined a problem behavior that is not already addressed in the student's BIP, a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) must be performed to determine the "ABC's" for the students behavior. The ABC's are "Antecedent", "Behavior", "Consequence". If the teacher is able to determine the antecedent, events taking place before the behavior, a solution for the behavior can be created. In addition, consequences for the behavior should be taken into consideration. Often, teachers consider consequences to be a "bad" term, but in the case of the "ABC's", a consequence is a term used for the resulting action following the behavior.
For example:
- Johnny is asked to write his name on the paper (Antecedent)
- Johnny throws the paper on the floor (Behavior)
- Johnny is yelled at by the teacher to pick up his paper (Consequence)

By examining all that lead up to, and following the problem behavior, an individual can determine what might have prompted the student to demonstrate the problem behavior.

Once the antecedent, behavior and consequences have been determined for a student there are several ways to help promote and change behaviors. Most occur with a variety of different consequences. Possible solutions (consequences) include but are not limited to:
- Positive Behavior Support
- Ignoring Negative Behavior
- Reward Systems
- Behavior Charts
- Point Systems that work toward a positive activity
- One-On-One Time
- Removal from the situation
- Redirection
- Praise

When working with students with behavior disorders there are several teaching strategies that be utilized to help assist the student and gain greater success. Some of these strategies include but are not limited to: (Resources from Best Practices Guide to Intervention)
- Clearly defining expectations (of positive behavior)
- Clearly defining negative behaviors that the student is expected to avoid (If there are several, pick 1-2 to work on a time. This is a process)
- Communication with family members - Inform and include family to ensure success
- Establish a connection with the student
- Teach about emotions
- Provide alternative ways to express anger - This may need to be something that is directly taught
- Role-Play positive ways to react
- Provide Visual Aides and Stories
- Provide Feedback - This could be a visual cue, such as a check mark or removing a chip when the student exhibits a negative behavior
- Allow the student to journal or write down frustrations
- Incentives
- Develop a contract

Additional Resources

There are many websites out there that help teachers adapt to students with behavior disabilities. A few of them are listed

below.

Ehow - Strategies to encourage learning in students.
University of Missouri-Columbia - If you would like to obtain a Degree in Special Education one of the many universities to complete coursework is Mizzou!
National Association of Special Education Teachers - NASET provides many resources for emotional and behavioral disorders. This site is specifically designed for teachers and has answers to many questions.
Project STAY - Project STAY is a multi-disciplinary team that consist of behavior analysts, social worker, and special and regular education teacher as well as a data collector. They work to support students with Behavior Disabilities.
Best Practices for Behavior/Emotional Disorders
Behavior Advisor - Provides a variety of resources and support for individuals with behavior or emotional disorders.
FBA Training Manual
FBA Analysis and Description - Description of a FBA and how to positively support students and perform a FBA.

Source Cited

Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Special Education

http://specialed.about.com/od/behavioremotiona1/a/Behavioral-And-Emotional-Disorders-In-Special-Education.htm

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

www.dese.mo.gov

Jerry Webster's article "Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Special Education"

http://specialed.about.com/od/behavioremotiona1/a/Behavioral-And-Emotional-Disorders-In-Special-Education.htm

Project Stay

http://projectstay.com/

Teaching Students with Severe Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Best Practices Guide To Intervention. (n.d.). *Washington State Education - Special Education*.

www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/pubdocs/bestpractices.pdf

National Association of Special Education Teachers: Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

http://www.naset.org/emotionaldisturbance2.0.html

Behavior Advisor - FBA

http://www.behavioradvisor.com/FBA.html

Practical Functional Behavior Assessment Training Manual for School-Based Personnel - Dr. Sheldon Loman & Dr. Christopher Borgmeier

http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/publications/PracticalFBA_TrainingManual.pdf

Images: Stockvault.net