



Transition Considerations in Emotional & Behavioral Disorder Private Placement Programs

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Background

- Students with emotional disabilities (ED) account for the highest percentage of special education students educated in alternative school settings.²
- In 2010, twenty-nine *emotional disability private placements* existed in the state of Arizona. These programs are dedicated solely to providing services to students classified as having an ED.¹
- Under the Arizona special education funding formula, school districts receive \$15,560 for each student with ED served in an alternative setting dedicated solely to students with ED. This is a substantial increase from the \$9.60 received when those same students are served in less restrictive educational environments, (such as self-contained classrooms or general education).¹
- Previous research indicates that alternative programs do not significantly improve academic, behavioral, or social outcomes for students with an ED when compared to more traditional educational environments.⁴
- Least restrictive environment (LRE) often is incorrectly applied in making decisions regarding student placement.³

Purpose:

Identify factors contributing to decisions regarding the transfer of students out of emotional disability private placement schools in Arizona.

ED Private Placements

Student Characteristics:

- Special Education eligibility category of Emotional Disability (ED)
- Possible mental illness with need for mental health services
- Exhibits behaviors with intensity and duration that exceeds that of students served in self-contained setting
- Requires additional supervision and environmental safety

Program Requirements:

- Part of continuum of service delivery options available within the local education agency (LEA)
- Separate public program which may be housed in a separate classroom or building on a regular school campus or in a separate site in the LEA.
- Utilizes curriculum that is aligned to/with the Arizona Academic Standards

IEP Components:

- Appropriate IEP goals with objectives or benchmarks if required
- Functional Behavior Assessment
- Behavior Intervention Plan
- Recommended: inclusion of Exit criteria and transition plan to promote student return to a less restrictive environment

Research Questions

- What differences exist between ED private placements in terms of transition criteria for students?
- How do ED private placements differ in their ability to transition students back to the general education environment?
- What factors contribute to the decision of transitioning students from ED private placements?

Methods

Interviews:

- Conducted with the program principal, lead teacher, and/or school psychologist based on availability and level of involvement in transition decision-making process
- Sessions were recorded and transcribed by the researcher
- Respondents reviewed transcriptions for correctness
- Respondents, given a menu of options formed from findings, were given the opportunity to add or remove factors to increase the accuracy of their reporting.

Participants

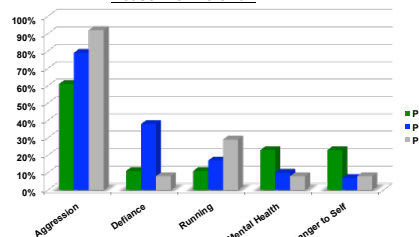
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION		
SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3
Middle School Only	Elementary – High	Elementary - High
One Classroom	Four Classrooms	Four Classrooms
Located on Public Middle School Campus	Separate School Site	Separate School Site
Student population from one school district	Student population from one school district	Student population from multiple school districts
2 nd Year PBS	No PBS	1 st Year PBS
TRANSITION PROCESS		
SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3
Goals Individualized to Student	Universal Schoolwide Goals for all Students	Universal Schoolwide Goals for all Students
Progress Reviewed Bi-Weekly	Progress Reviewed Quarterly	Progress Reviewed Quarterly
District Based Committee	Site Based Committee	Site Based Committee
Decision Based on Target Behavior	Decision Based on Set of Behaviors -Level System-	Decision Based on Set of Behaviors -Level System-

Participants (cont'd)

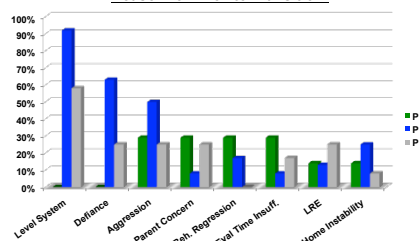
Student Population		
SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3
N = 8 (6M / 2F)	N = 29 (27M / 2F)	N = 14 (13M / 1F)
1 Elem / 7 Middle	12 Elem / 17 Middle	9 Elem / 5 Middle
Hispanic 50%	Caucasian 45%	Caucasian 50%
Caucasian 25%	Hispanic 28%	Hispanic 22%
Nat. Amer. 13%	Afr. Amer. 17%	Afr. Amer. 14%
Asian 13%	Nat. Amer. 7%	Unspec. 14%
	Asian 3%	
38% of students in program 1+ years	66% of students in program 1+ years	64% of students in program 1+ years

Results

Reason for Referral:

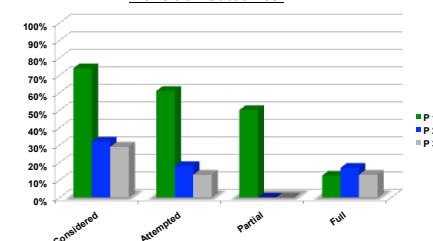


Reason for "No" to Transition:



Results (cont'd)

Transition Outcomes:



Discussion

- Collectively, EDPs demonstrated limited success returning students full time back to general education
- While aggression is the primary reason students were referred to a private placement program, it is not the primary reason why students are denied transition.
- Examples of resistance to transition were exhibited by school officials as well as individual students and parents.
- EDPs located off general education campuses were less likely to use partial inclusion than EDPs located directly on general education sites

References

- Arizona Department of Education. N.p.(2011, Jan 31). *Specific Details Related to Submitting and Verifying SPED Data*. Retrieved February 18, 2011 from the Arizona Department of Education Web site: <https://www.ade.az.gov/schoolfinance/star/>
- Greene, J., & Winters, M. (2007). Debunking a special education myth: Don't blame private options for rising costs. *Education Next*, 7, 67-71.
- Jacobson, J. W. (2000). The illusion of full inclusion: A comprehensive critique of a current special education bandwagon, ed. J.M. Kaufman and D.P. Hallahan, 1995. Pro-Ed, Austin, Texas, 362pp, *Behavioral Interventions*, 15(4), 355-359.
- Lane, K. L., Wehby, J., Little, M. A., & Cooley, C. (2005). Students educated in self-contained classrooms and self-contained schools: Part II--How do they progress. *Behavioral Disorders*, 30, 363-374.