Deaf with Emotional Behavior Disturbance:
Effective Classroom Strategies

Presented by Andrea Rapoza
Submitted to Dr. Caroline Guardino

University of North Florida
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Introduction

The field of Deaf education has been around since 1817, yet educators feel they lack the curriculum, instructional strategies and modifications needed to adequately serve their students Luckner and Carter (2001). Furthermore, research on deaf students with additional disabilities is scarce and not necessarily focused on the tools and materials teachers need to be effective. The purpose of this paper is to examine the research on deaf students with emotional/behavior disorders. In addition, the author will explore the research on various strategies that have been found to meet the needs of emotional/behavior disorders, including Class-Wide Peer Tutoring and self-monitoring of behaviors. The author will present additional research that discusses strategies developed for the general population of students with emotional and behavioral disorders and how these strategies have been adapted and modified to be utilized in a classroom with deaf/hard-of-hearing students.

Emotional/Behavior Disorder

Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) is defined as:

> An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Jolivette, Patton, & Ramsey, 2006).

In a study conducted by Jones and Sinnot (2005) they reviewed an educational database in Illinois that contained information on 115 deaf/hard of hearing students with emotional disturbances over a six-year span of time. They found that 71% of these students were male, as compared to only 54% of deaf/hard of hearing students in the general population being male. They also found that 21% of the dually diagnosed students lived with both parents, compared to 68% of the students who were only deaf/hard of hearing. Their studies showed that a significant number of students with deafness and emotional behavior disorders are more likely to come from single parent homes, ethnic minorities and/or low income. They also suggest that communication methods for deaf students with EBD rely mostly on ASL and display a lack of the use of the English language. Ewing and Jones (2003) explain that the need for a stronger foundation in language development suggests that students who are deaf with EBD should be "placed in an educational setting with deaf peers (268)."

Nieysen (2009) states, "At present, only one third of students with EBD receive 60% or more of their education outside the general education classroom…teachers are finding themselves working with students whose specialized needs surpass the teacher's repertoire of effective strategies (233)." For teachers this presents an additional challenge in meeting the needs of students who are deaf with EBD. With such a limited amount of research available, this paper summarizes strategies that researchers have found to be useful when working with students with EBD that can be transferred to students who are dually diagnosed with deafness and EBD.

For the purpose of this paper, the author will focus on three main strategies that have shown positive results for EBD students: performance feedback, self-management, and class-wide peer tutoring. Performance feedback and self-monitoring are strategies that require both the teacher and student to be aware of and judge the targeted behaviors. Although the studies that addressed performance feed back and self-monitoring were not conducted specifically with deaf students, the author of this paper found the strategies to be transferrable to deaf students with very minimal modifications. Class-Wide Peer Tutoring involves a more group directed learning process that allows students to become both the tutor and the tutee to enhance learning opportunities. Class-Wide Peer Tutoring showed many benefits to increasing on-task behaviors with EBD students. Ewing and Jones demonstrated how these strategies could be utilized within a dually diagnosed deaf/EBD classroom.

Performance Feedback

Performance feedback is a classroom strategy that requires the teacher to immediately and specifically respond to a student's behavior and/or performance. Research has shown that performance feedback, such as complimenting an effort or offering a tangible reward for desired behaviors, has increased time on-task behaviors for students with EBD (Ewing, S. et. al, 2006; Niesyn, 2009). Ewing et al (2006) state, "Performance feedback refers to a process of providing objective, data-based feedback with the aim to improve, transfer or maintenance of newly acquired skills (538)." To explain, a deaf student with EBD has a targeted behavior of raising his hand and waiting to be called on without screaming and/or hitting his desk to get the teacher's attention. When the teacher asks a question, the student raises his hand quietly. The teacher then gives the student a token and states, I like the way you raised your hand quietly. The student has now been rewarded for the behavior and was informed of the specific behavior that he did to earn the reward. In the future, the student will most likely raise his hand quietly again to receive an additional token. In addition when used with students who have EBD, the more often a student was praised the more the undesirable behavior decreased. Behaviorist theory would suggest that teachers could change a student's behaviors based on the response to the behavior. When a teacher immediately praises the child for a positive behavior, that behavior is being reinforced and is likely to happen again. As the student with EBD becomes more aware of their behaviors, the teacher can wean out his/her direct involvement and allow the student to accept more responsibility for his/her behavior.

Niesyn (2009) describes feedback for desired behaviors should be immediate and specific to the behavior that the teacher desires. A wanted behavior should be praised immediately each and every time the behavior occurs. For example, in Niesyn's (2009) study, the author suggested that teachers of students with EBD often forget to praise them when they behave appropriately. The teacher exhausts himself or herself with correcting the inappropriate behavior, and forgets that the appropriate behaviors should be rewarded. Most simply, Niesyn suggest that by increasing a student's opportunity to correctly answer a question either through tutoring or scaffolding opens additional opportunities to praise them as well. The author also suggests that a token economy reward system that could easily be implemented into daily classroom activities is an additional way to provide praise for wanted behaviors.

Self-Management

In a study by Jolivette, Patton and Ramsey (2006) it was reported that teachers are able to change inappropriate student behaviors by teaching the student to self-manage his or her own behaviors. When a teacher spends most of his/her time trying to manage student behaviors alone, less time is spent on academics. Self-management strategies take the responsibility from the teacher and place it on the student making them more responsible and more aware of his/her own behaviors. In addition, self-management is a simple strategy, that when taught, can be used by any student regardless of their age and/or abilities. For example, in Jolviette et.al. (2006) study, the examined the behaviors of a 3rd grade boy who demonstrated aggressive behaviors. With his teacher, the little boy sat down and listed the behaviors that they wanted to change. The student was then given replacement behaviors that would be considered acceptable within the classroom. The teacher and the student implemented the program together and then compared their assessment of his success. The more correctly he monitored himself, the more "points" he earned. As time progressed, the student was able to monitor his behaviors without any assistance from the teacher and the desired behaviors had replaced the aggressive, undesirable, ones. Niesyn (2009) states that taking instructional time to teach students how to monitor their own behaviors may be time consuming in the beginning but is a useful strategy for all students. The teacher is responsible for implementing the strategy and explicitly instructing the student in its use. The student ultimately becomes responsible overtime for independently managing his/her own behaviors.

Class-Wide Peer Tutoring

As reported by Niesyn (2009) peer tutoring is a highly successful strategy, that when utilized in the classroom, can positively assist on-task learning behaviors for students with EBD. Bowman-Perrott (2009) defines Class-Wide Peer Tutoring as, "a reciprocal peer-tutoring format that allows students to serve both as tutor (teacher) and tutee (student) to review and learn content material (260)." Class-Wide Peer Tutoring is student centered and thus removes the teacher from a large part of the instruction. For students with EBD studies have shown that utilizing non-disabled peers for instruction has helped students with disabilities to display more appropriate behaviors and develop more appropriate social skills within the classroom (Jolivette, Sasso and Stichter, 2004). Jolivette, Sasso and Stichter (2004) further point out that utilization of peers in instruction removes the teacher from the situation and allows for student behavior to be shaped in a more social context. Bowman-Perrot (2009) suggests three main benefits to Class-Wide Peer Tutoring. First, Bowman-Perrott (2009) identifies that students who participate in peer tutoring experience one-on-one instruction. The student is able to learn how to explain the information in such a way that their peer can demonstrate understanding. This helps the tutor to internalize the material. Students are also responsible for learning the information and demonstrating that knowledge through a variety of activities. During peer-tutoring the teacher is able to walk around to individual groups and observe their understanding of the material allowing the teacher to correct any possible errors being made. In addition, the students are gaining positive social experiences through guided interactions that they may not otherwise have. Ewing and Jones (2003) best explain that children must have opportunities to interact in social situations as they develop. More importantly, deaf students benefit from this opportunity to interact with other students in order to have the same opportunities for language development. Gardner, Herring-Harrison and Lovelace (2007) describe how deaf students are able to utilize this strategy

as well with minimal accommodations. They explain that the same presentation can be used as with hearing kids, but teachers should take into account the visual needs and the need for free hands when utilizing this strategy. For example, it was suggested that if vocabulary cards are being used, students who are deaf/hard-of-hearing should be provided a stand to hold the cards up to allow free movement of their hands.

Bowman-Perrott (2009) stated that Class-Wide Peer Tutoring helps the teacher by decreasing the amount of work required from them, it can be used in short blocks of time and it allows the teacher to see where adjustments need to be made to the instruction to facilitate better learning. It has been addressed by Garner, Herring-Harrison and Lovelace (2007) that students who are deaf may need additional time to be trained in Class-Wide Peer Tutoring, as well as more time to complete the required tasks.

Bowman-Perrott (2009) states that Class-Wide Peer Tutoring is also beneficial to the student because it provides opportunities to be correct, it is student focused, and has an atmosphere of cooperative learning. Ewing and Jones (2009) explain that peer tutoring is a useful strategy for all students and is not limited to who can access its benefits. Gardner, Herring-Harrison and Lovelace (2007) sum up the positive effects of Class-Wide Peer Tutoring for students who are deaf by stating. "Students can benefit emotionally from the opportunity to be entrusted with the instruction of others (86)."

Conclusion

Throughout the discussion within this research, it has become apparent that there is a great need for more research in this area. Strategies for hearing students with EBD have been implemented with what appears to be much success. It would be beneficial for future studies to examine, in more detail, the application of these strategies on students who are dually diagnosed as deaf with emotional behavior disorder. Furthermore, additional research should consider the factors specific to deaf students when applying strategies to meet their needs. For example, communication needs and language barriers should be taken into consideration when implementing strategies to meet the needs of these students.

Working with students who have EBD can become emotionally exhausting for teachers, even more so when they feel they are lacking appropriate strategies to meet the specific needs of their students. When the student is dually diagnosed with deafness and EBD it becomes even more taxing because research is limited. However, as demonstrated by this paper, many strategies that are useful for EBD students such as performance feedback, self-management strategies and class-wide peer tutoring can be modified to meet the needs of dually diagnosed students. As teachers, and parents, it is important to recognize that are role is to assist the student in becoming independent by teaching strategies to help increase positive behaviors. All students, no matter age or disability, can be taught to manage their own behaviors when given the right tools and encouragement.

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