

Revised January 2006

Students with Reading and Behavioral Needs

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Students with emotional behavioral disorders (EBD) present teachers with behavioral and instructional challenges. This monograph presents information on effective strategies for teaching reading to students with EBD.

Is there an overlap between behavior and reading difficulty?

The co-occurrence of both learning and behavioral needs for many students with EBD is well documented among educators and within the professional literature. In some instances, it is difficult to determine whether the reading difficulties are causing the behaviors, or vice-versa. Research has shown that a) reading difficulties can be linked to conduct disorder and delinquent behavior in older students (Hinshaw, 1992; Maguin, Loeber, & LeMahieu, 1993), b) students with EBD have demonstrated a history of underachievement in reading (Mastropieri, Jenkins, & Scruggs, 1985), and c) a complex pattern of variables is associated with behavior problems (e.g., attention problems, socio-economic status, and language proficiency) making it difficult to determine the direction of the relationship between academic and behavior problems.

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How does a special education teacher determine whether a student has overlapping reading and behavior difficulties?

First, it's critical to identify the function of a student's behavior. Gibb and Wilder (2002) provide an excellent resource on the use of functional analysis to improve reading instruction for students with a learning disability (LD) or EBD. In their article, Gibb and Wilder discuss hypotheses that may stem from the functional analysis (e.g., students do not want to do the task; students have not had enough help with the task; students have not had to do the task that way before) and link assessment information with reading skill areas identified as important by the National Reading Panel (2000), specifically, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

What data is important to collect on the student's reading performance?

Following identification of the function of the behavior, it is important to collect data on the student's reading performance. One system of data collection that is beneficial is curriculum-based measurement (CBM). In this system of progress monitoring, a

student's reading performance is assessed frequently using 1-minute probes of oral reading. When graphed, these data paint a picture of student performance and progress in reading over time and in response to intervention. Combining ongoing data collection in the areas of behavior and reading can create a powerful assessment and decision-making tool for the teacher.

What teaching strategies positively affect reading performance?

Once the teacher has determined that the student's behavior is related to poor performance in reading, interventions can be implemented that positively affect reading performance. Despite the apparent need for research-based interventions for EBD students in reading, there has been limited work done in this area. In the only review of reading interventions for students with EBD to date, Coleman and Vaughn (2000) express alarm that more research has not been conducted in reading with EBD students, especially in light of increased inclusion of these students into the general education classroom and the requirement to provide access to the general education curriculum for these students. To supplement their review of the literature, Coleman and Vaughn interviewed experienced teachers who worked with EBD students on practices that they found effective. Four intervention themes from this review included student engagement, peer tutoring programs, direct instruction curriculum, and progress monitoring.

1. Student Engagement

Student engagement, active responding (Espin & Yell, 1987), or opportunity-to-respond (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1984) is a key factor in academic achievement for all students, and particularly for those students with EBD, who may be inattentive, aggressive, unmotivated, depressed, or quiet and reserved. When student engagement is high, students are unable to exhibit inappropriate behaviors.

Student engagement refers to a student participating in written, motoric, or oral activities designated by the teacher; it does not refer simply to being "on-task." Identifying activities in each lesson that actively engage students and offer them opportunities to respond can be a challenging but beneficial activity for teachers. Special education teachers can work with their colleagues to brainstorm activities that provide high levels of engagement for students in reading.

2. Peer-assisted Learning Strategies

One example of a peer-tutoring system that provides high levels of student engagement is Peer-assisted Learning Strategies or PALS (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Burish, 2000). PALS pairs a "reader" with a coach to practice critical reading skills, including fluency, comprehension, summarizing, predicting, and paraphrasing. Elements of direct instruction, repeated reading, and reciprocal teaching are built into the PALS lessons, making the approach highly effective for students with and without disabilities.

Research on the effects of PALS with EBD students has demonstrated positive effects in many cases (Franca, Kerr, Reitz, & Lambert, 1990; Osguthorpe & Scruggs, 1986; Locke & Fuchs, 1995). Mixed results were found in a study by Wehby, Falk, Barton-Arwood, Lane, and Cooley (2003) where students with EBD demonstrated moderate gains in reading achievement, slight improvement for some students in time spent attending, and no improvement in inappropriate behavior during the reading instruction. However, it appears that PALS may have a positive influence on students' academic and behavior performance and is a viable option for teachers that have EBD students. (For more information on PALS, visit: <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/pals/>)

3. Direct Instruction

Direct instruction has proven highly effective when teaching reading to students with EBD. These students need instruction that is explicit and systematic, that is scaffolded with respect to skill learning, and that is directed, guided, and modeled by the

teacher. All of these elements can be incorporated into reading lessons with materials that a teacher already has in his or her classroom. A good resource on direct instruction teaching strategies is *Direct Instruction Reading* (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004). Alternatively, direct instruction reading curriculum such as *Reading Mastery* (find more information on sraonline.com) or *Open Court Reading* (Adams, Bereiter, Carruthers, Case, Hirshberg, and McKeough, 2000) can be purchased and used in the classroom.

4. Progress Monitoring

Implementation of ongoing systems of progress monitoring is another method that can help in the identification of what is and is not working for students in the area of reading. Deno (2002) describes CBM as a method of progress monitoring in which individual goals are set for each student and instruction is maximized, as teachers use the student data formatively, making changes in instruction to help students meet their goals. Deno goes on to suggest that an increased focus on academic skills for students with EBD might result in a decrease in problem behavior. Connected to the issue of academic engagement discussed earlier, Deno feels that "academic progress is incompatible with disruptive social behavior," (p.16), in that, when students are making academic gains, they are less likely to engage in negative social behaviors. Thus, implementation of progress monitoring can serve a dual benefit to teachers as they collect data on students' academic performance and also maximize students' instructional time.

Putting It All Together

One recommendation is uniform across both reading and behavior literature—the need to identify students who struggle in one or both areas and intervene early. To this end, the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education has funded six early reading and behavior research centers. For example, Juniper Gardens Children's Project affiliated with the University of Kansas, in partnership with the University of Missouri, is examining implementation of school-wide systems of positive behavior support to

provide prevention and early intervention of problem behaviors along a continuum of primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of support.

The research centers are also building primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of reading support. At the primary level, all students receive universal supports. For behavior this involves being taught key behavioral expectations. For reading, it means using empirically validated reading instruction for an extended instructional period. At the secondary level, students receive more intensive behavioral support (e.g., small group social skills instruction) and more intensive reading support. Finally, at the tertiary level, students receive highly individualized behavior or reading interventions. Basic logic across both the reading and behavior interventions include using data to make decisions, matching intensity of intervention to intensity of student need, intervening early, and involving all students and staff in effective practices. Evaluation of all center outcomes will lead to the development of replicable models for use in all elementary schools across the U.S.

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This article originally appeared in *Missouri Innovations in Education*, November 2004.

World Wide Web Resources Related to Reading and Students with EBD

CIERA Instructional Resources

www.ciera.org/library/instresrc/

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) at the University of Michigan School of Education is a national center for research on early reading. It is a consortium of educators from five universities, teacher educators, teachers, professional organizations, schools, school districts, and publishers of texts, tests, and technology. CIERA's page of instructional resources provides information about how to improve reading instruction.

Coordination, Consultation, and Evaluation (CCE) Center

www.wcer.wisc.edu/cce/centers.html

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has funded six research centers and a coordination center (i.e., the CCE Center) to investigate and implement reading and behavior intervention models for students in grades K–3. Each of the six research centers is implementing interventions at three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The CCE Center provides technical assistance to the research centers and serves in an advisory capacity to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). The six research centers are:

Centers Implementing both Reading and Behavior Interventions

1. **Center for Early Intervention in Reading and Behavior to Improve the Performance of Young Children, University of Kansas**
www.wcer.wisc.edu/cce/kansas.html
2. **Behavior and Reading Improvement Center, University of North Carolina-Charlotte**
www.wcer.wisc.edu/cce/carolina.html

Centers Implementing Behavior Interventions

3. **Center for At-Risk Children's Services, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**
www.wcer.wisc.edu/cce/nebraska.html
4. **Research and Demonstration Center on School-Wide Behavior Support, University of Oregon College of Education**
www.wcer.wisc.edu/cce/behavior.html

Centers Implementing Reading Interventions

5. **Center for Improving Reading Competence Using Intensive Treatments School-Wide (Project CIRCUITS), University of Oregon**
www.wcer.wisc.edu/cce/reading.html
6. **Preventing Reading Difficulties: A Three-Tiered Intervention Model, University of Texas—Austin**
www.texasreading.org/utcrcla/research/default.asp

Guidance for the Reading First Program

www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/guidance.doc

The No Child Left Behind Act signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, established Reading First as a new, high-quality evidence-based program with the intention of enabling all students to become successful readers by grade 3. This publication

describes the purpose and components of Reading First as well as how to develop an effective Reading First Program.

Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement (IDEA)

<http://idea.uoregon.edu>

IDEA, housed within the College of Education at the University of Oregon, promotes the development of research and outreach activities to improve the academic and social achievement of children and young adults.

Intervention Central

www.interventioncentral.org

Intervention Central offers free tools and resources designed to help school staff and parents promote positive classroom behaviors and foster effective learning.

Mathes, P.G., Howard, J.K., Allen, S.H., & Fuchs, D. (1998). IRA: Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for First-Grade Readers. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(1), 62–94

www.reading.org/publications/journals/rrq/v33/i1/abstracts/RRQ-33-1-Mathes.html

This research examines the effectiveness of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for First-Grade Readers (First-Grade PALS) as a tool for enhancing the reading achievement of different learner types, particularly low-achieving students, representing the range of academic diversity typically present in primary grade classrooms. This research article can be purchased from the International Reading Association for a small “pay-per-view” fee.

National Reading Panel Report (2000)

www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/smallbook.htm

This federally-sponsored report reviews the literature in the following areas of reading instruction: alphabetsics (including phonological awareness and phonics instruction), word analysis, fluency, and comprehension (including vocabulary and comprehension instruction). While it documents the effectiveness of explicit and systematic reading instruction, it also recommends providing instruction early and intensively to ensure all children are reading by the end of third grade.

NCREL: What Does Scientifically-Based Reading Research Mean to Teachers and Principals?

www.ncrel.org/rf/sbrr/

This web site introduces the concept of scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) to teachers and principals involved in the Reading First Initiative. SBRR is the guiding principle for reading instruction, professional development, and assessment in the Reading First Initiative.

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998)

<http://books.nap.edu/catalog/6023.html> (LP2768)

This report by the National Research Council reports that students who struggle with reading need intensive instruction that is “explicit and systematic.” Reading instruction should incorporate phonological awareness, word identification, fluency, and comprehension instruction. It examines factors that put children at risk of poor reading and explores how literacy can be fostered at an early age. It also recommends the identification of groups of children at risk, effective instruction at an early age, and an understanding of how children learn to read.

Reading Mastery Curriculum

www.cedu.niu.edu/pride/web7.htm

Reading Mastery is designed to accelerate the learning of at-risk students by teaching basic decoding and comprehension skills. Curriculum materials and instructional sequences attempt to move students to mastery at the fastest possible pace. This web page contains a research article about Reading Mastery.

Reading and Behavior Center at Juniper Gardens Children's Project, University of Kansas

www.lsi.ku.edu/jgprojects/r&b/Project%20Info/Reading%20Interventions.htm

This web page describes various reading intervention curricula designed for the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

Scientifically-Based Reading Research

www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/brochurs/SBRR.pdf

This printable brochure describes scientifically-based reading research along with recommended web sites for review and contacts for additional information.

What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)

www.whatworks.ed.gov/comingnext/reading.html

WWC was established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences with the goal of providing educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a trusted source of scientific evidence about what works in education. WWC provides systematic reviews that focus on reading interventions for students in grades K-3, with the purpose of improving phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, or any combination of these reading skills. The first set of WWC reports focuses on interventions designed for students with beginning reading difficulties. The second set of reports focuses on interventions designed for general beginning reading students.



Revised January 2006

This is a publication of the Center for Innovations in Education, University of Missouri, 3 London Hall, Columbia, MO 65211 (573) 884-7275 or Relay in MO (800) 735-2966 (TDD), www.cise.missouri.edu.

The development and printing of this material was supported entirely by federal funds appropriated in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability in its programs, services, or employment practices. If you have needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need this publication in an alternative format, notify the Center for Innovations in Education at (573) 884-7275, (800) 976-2473 (MO only), or Relay in Missouri (800) 735-2966 (TDD). Efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.