Emotional Disturbance and Educational Placement Decision-Making: Preliminary Analyses of a National Survey of Secondary Level School Professionals

Carl E. Paternite, Ph.D.
Stephen P. Becker, M.A.
Center for School-Based Mental Health Programs
Miami University

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Center for Adolescent Research in Schools
Moving Youth Toward Success
Purpose

✓ Examine issues related to the identification, educational placement, and intervention services for middle/high school age students with Emotional Disturbance (ED), from the perspective of educators who work with students with emotional/behavioral problems

✓ Including factors related to placement of students in highly restrictive educational settings
Prior Relevant Research


Method

✓ A national online confidential survey with educators who work with middle/high school age students with ED

✓ With assistance of Market Data Retrieval (MDR) Education Universe 2009/2010 data base (n=9,119)

✓ Participants recruited through both e-mail (n=6,263) and postal mail (n=2,856)

✓ Initial contact and two follow-ups

✓ Gift card drawings as incentive for participation
Sample

✓ 1246 respondents from 47 states

✓ Participation rate:
  58% (of those who opened correspondence)
  14% (of those contacted)

✓ Current preliminary analyses:
  1025 respondents working in high schools (N=573) or middle schools (N=452); Excludes those in K-12 buildings;
  97% working directly with students classified with ED
Respondents by Population Density

- Rural: 22%
- Urban: 22%
- Suburban: 25%
- Rural-Suburban: 20%
- Urban-Suburban: 11%
School Enrollment by Type

Mean school enrollment for full sample = 1045
% of Students with an IEP by Density

U > all other groups
RS > S

Total sample M = 16%
Percent of Students Classified with ED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDEA Data</td>
<td>~1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Sample</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p < .01$
Social Maladjustment: Adherence to the Exclusionary Clause?

Yes, 49%

No, 27%

Unsure, 24%
Educational Placement Settings

- Regular Classroom with Supports: 44.6%
- Special Education Classroom in Regular School Setting: 46.5%
- Public School Program Outside School Building: 3.3%
- Residential Treatment: 2.0%
- Private School Program: 0.7%
- Homebound Instruction: 0.9%
Significant Placement Differences Between High Schools and Middle Schools

- Homebound Instruction: High School vs. Middle School, \( p < .02 \)
- Public Program Outside of School: High School vs. Middle School, \( p < .02 \)
How Often Do Various Persons Initiate ED Evaluations?

- Student
- Nurse
- Social Worker
- Special Ed. Coordinator
- Parent(s)
- Principal/Administrator
- Psychologist
- Counselor
- Special Ed. Teacher
- Classroom Teacher

Scale:
- 0: Never
- 1: Rarely
- 2: Occasionally
- 3: Frequently
- 4: Always

- Mental Health Provider
- Classroom Teacher
How *Active a Role* is Played in Placement Decision-Making?

- **No Active Role**
- **Student**
- **Mental Health Provider**
- **Counselor/Social Worker**
- **Parent(s)**
- **Psychologist**
- **Administrator**
- **Classroom Teacher**

The scale ranges from 0 to 5, with 0 indicating no active role and 5 indicating a very active role.
Students

High School  Middle School  
Request Evaluation

High School  Middle School  
Active Role

p < .000  

p < .000
Teachers

High School  |  Middle School

Request Evaluation

High School  |  Middle School

Active Role

p < .000

P < .002
Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request Evaluation, p &lt; .000</td>
<td> </td>
<td> </td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Role, ns</td>
<td> </td>
<td> </td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who makes the final placement decision when there is a disagreement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student himself/herself</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School mental health provider</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g., judge)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher(s)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School psychologist</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Team decision</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s)/family members</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Relevant are Each of the Following Factors for ED Eligibility?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documented Diagnoses</th>
<th>Problematic Behaviors</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Frequent Tardiness, Absences, Truancy</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Disruptive Classroom Behavior</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD or ODD</td>
<td>Aggressive Behaviors toward Adults</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bipolar Disorder</td>
<td>Aggressive Behaviors toward Peers</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia</td>
<td>Strong Parental Advocacy or Resistance</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ Level</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Test Scores</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades on Report Cards</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 = not relevant, 5 = very relevant
How Well are Domains Addressed for Students with ED?

0 = very poorly, 5 = very well

- Academic Needs
- Emotional Needs: p<.01
- Behavioral Needs: p<.01
- Vocational Readiness Skills: p<.001
- Capitalizing on Strengths & Weaknesses: p<.04

Legend:
- Gray = High School
- Black = Middle School
How Often are Various Factors Used in Determining Degree of Restrictiveness?

- Financial cost to the family: 1.8
- Extent of gang involvement: 1.9
- Logistical issues for the family: 1.9
- Logistical issues for the school: 2
- Lack of success in less restrictive placement: 4
- Severity of student's emotional problems: 4.4
- Severity of disruptive behavior: 4.5
- Severity of aggression toward peers: 4.5
- Severity of aggression toward adults: 4.5

0 = never, 5 = always
Factors Determining Restrictiveness: Differences between High Schools and Middle Schools

0 = never, 5 = often

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression toward peers</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy/school absences</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher recommendation</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of factors in considering a specific highly restrictive placement

- Logistical issues for school: 2.5
- Logistical issues for family: 2.5
- Financial cost for family: 2.7
- Financial cost for school: 2.9
- Documented effectiveness: 4.0

0 = not important, 5 = very important
How seriously are various alternative placements considered?

0 = not seriously, 5 = very seriously

- Charter school: 1.3
- Computer or web-based program: 2.1
- Alternative private (non-public) school: 2.4
- Public residential treatment program: 2.7
- Homebound program: 2.7
- Alternative public school: 3.7
Restrictive Placement Options: Differences between High Schools and Middle Schools

![Bar chart showing differences in placement options between high schools and middle schools.](chart.png)

- Alternative public school: $p < .01$
- Computer program: $p < .001$
- Homebound program: $p < .05$

Legend:
- High School
- Middle School
For students in restrictive alternative placements, how much contact is there between alternative placement teachers/staff and teachers/staff in your school?

$M = 2.3$
For students in restrictive alternative placements, what is the extent of involvement of teachers/staff in your school in monitoring students’ continued success?

$M = 2.3$
Are Placements Viewed as Permanent or Temporary?

- Permanent: 4%
- Temporary: 21%
- Other: 1%
- Temporary Depending on Success: 74%
What percentage of students actually return to your school from restrictive alternative placements?

- Less than 5%: 26%
- 5-25%: 24%
- 26-50%: 13%
- 51-75%: 19%
- 76-100%: 18%
When students return to your school, how often are they monitored?

- Every day; 52%
- Every week; 23%
- Monthly or biweekly; 9%
- Monitored every semester or less, or only if problems worsen; 16%
What is the importance of various outcomes in judging placement effectiveness?

- Student has an appropriate post-graduation vocational placement/job: 3.2
- Student passes proficiency test requirements: 3.2
- Student's mental health needs reduced: 3.8
- Student's academic performance improves: 3.9
- Student meets graduation requirements: 3.9
- Student's disciplinary problems reduced substantially or eliminated: 4.4
Effectiveness of Placement Outcomes: Differences between High Schools and Middle Schools

- Meets graduation requirements: *p* < .001
- Post-graduation vocation: *P* < .001
- Mental health needs reduced: *p* < .01
Discussion Questions and Follow-up Analyses

✓ Understanding of, adherence to, and implications of social maladjustment exclusion

✓ Perspectives/practices/roles of middle vs. high school teachers; Differences in educational experiences for middle vs. high school students with ED

✓ Identification threshold issues: externalizing/international problems and academic deficits

✓ Permanence of highly restrictive placement assignments

✓ Teacher, student, and school profile/cluster analyses to examine ED identification, educational placement, and intervention service practices in more depth
Next Study

✓ National survey of district level directors of special education services