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WHAT TREATMENTS AND STRATEGIES PRODUCE THE BEST EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR TEENS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, IMPULSE CONTROL ISSUES, AND/OR PERSONALITY DISORDERS?

Abstract:

What treatments and strategies produce the best educational outcomes for teens with learning disabilities, impulse control issues, or personality disorders?

This paper offers insights into what strategies school officials and parents could deploy to manage students with impulsivity, attention-deficit/hyperactivity and/or learning disorders. Students with these classifications are protected in the United States by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees a free and appropriate education to all students in the least restrictive environment.

Learning disabilities, from dyslexia and dyscalculia to auditory processing disorder, can affect a student's ability to perform at grade level. A struggling student might externalize their frustration to cover up their disorder. Professional behaviorists often attribute externalizing as a defense mechanism - disruptive outbursts, which can lead parents and teachers away from finding the true cause of the student's emotional triggers. The result is that a student might be disciplined for their behavior instead of being diagnosed and provided suitable treatment for their disorder.

Students who present disruptive behaviors are subject to discipline and punishment, because teachers and administrators demand order in the classroom to meet the rigorous state-mandated curriculum that must be taught each school year. Every outburst and disruption takes time away from instruction and that places additional pressure on teachers, many of whom don't believe it's their role to manage emotionally troubled children. So discipline is demanded because - sadly - it makes life easier for the teacher and other students when a student with an impulse control issue or a personality disorder is not present.

But if discipline means being suspended or expelled, then the student's academic progress suffers. Approximately 14% of all public school students in the United States in 2017-2018 received special education services. 34% of those students had specific learning disabilities, while around 6% were classified as having a psychological diagnosis or mental health issue. Public schools, short of resources to manage every teen with emotional or neurological disorders, resort to suspension as the easiest course of action when there aren't enough guidance counselors and school psychologists - this translates to diminished educational experiences for tens of thousands of students.

This paper will discuss alternatives to suspension - therapy, medication, increased teacher training and programs run outside of the traditional school environment - then summarize if therapy or punishment resulted in the desired outcomes.

Keywords:

Educating Students with Learning Disabilities and Emotional Disorders

Disciplining Students with Impulse Control Disorders
Treatments for Teens with Disruptive Behavioral Disorders
Prescription Drug Efficacy for Teens with Disruptive Behavioral Disorders