

JAASEP

JOURNAL OF THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY *of*
SPECIAL EDUCATION
PROFESSIONALS



FALL, 2009



American Academy of Special Education Professionals

AASEP

**JOURNAL of the
AMERICAN ACADEMY
of
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS
(JAASEP)**

Fall, 2009

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Teacher Educators and Response to Intervention: A Survey of Knowledge, Knowledge Base and Program Changes to Teacher Preparation Programs

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Abstract

With the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), the definition of a specific learning disability was significantly altered. No longer is it required that a student demonstrate a discrepancy between ability and performance to receive educational support (Horowitz, 1999). With this in mind, researchers developed a survey designed to ascertain information about faculty knowledge and understanding of RtI, faculty knowledge base and the degree to which this mandate has affected their teacher education programs. This study reports the results of a web-based survey completed by 84 teacher educators from 70 colleges and universities in New York. The findings focus on faculty knowledge, knowledge base, and teacher training program changes relative to RtI. Implications for preparing teachers for today's classrooms are also discussed.

Teacher Educators and Response to Intervention: A Survey of Knowledge, Knowledge Base, and Program Changes to Teacher Preparation Programs

In 1997, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) informed the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of its concern with the discrepancy model used in the identification process of students with disabilities (Bradley & Danielson, 2004). This model required that students demonstrate a discrepancy between their predicted ability and their actual academic achievement. In reality, this translated into waiting for students to fail before support became available to them.

It is important to note that more than half of the students with disabilities receiving services in the public schools, principally in the general education classroom, are classified as having specific learning disabilities (USDOE, 2004). Therefore, the number of children involved is sizeable and the implications for all educators far reaching.

In response to NJCLD concerns, OSEP created the Learning Disabilities Initiative, which began as a comprehensive attempt to bring researchers, professional organizations, advocacy groups, educators, and other stakeholders to a consensus regarding the identification and implementation of improved procedures for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) identification. The Response to Intervention (RtI) Initiative grew out of this need to re-conceptualize the identification process for SLD.

Educational researchers have focused enormous energy looking at various aspects of RtI. Shinn (2007) examined the use of curriculum-based measurement in the process. O'Connor, Harty, & Fulmer (2005) studied the effectiveness of RtI as a means for identifying students at risk for learning disabilities. Sandomierski, Kincaid, & Algozzine (2007) and Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop (2007), and Sugai (2007) explained the similarities between RtI and positive behavioral support. In addition, Fairbanks et al looked at the relationships of the interventions and the tiered model. While all of this research is meaningful, additional attention is needed to investigate the impact of RtI on all the stakeholders, including teacher educators. This study seeks to examine teacher educator knowledge of RtI and the degree to which it affects teacher preparation programs.

RtI Defined

There should be alternate ways to identify individuals with SLD in addition to achievement testing, history, and observations of the child. Response to...quality intervention is the most promising method of alternate identification and can both promote effective practices in schools and help to close the gap between identification and treatment (Bradley, Danielson, & Hallahan, 2002; p. 8)

As a model consistent with a shift of emphasis from process to outcomes for students with disabilities, RtI has emerged as a positive alternative to the discrepancy model of learning disabilities identification. This shift is viewed as important both practically and theoretically in the field of SLD because historically, the focus has been on diagnosis rather than intervention effectiveness. Current research investigates the effectiveness of traditional and innovative interventions (Burns & Senesac, 2005; McMaster, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2005; Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2005; Ysseldyke, 2002).

The RtI approach represents multiple models, which share the following characteristics:

- Universal screening early in the first tier (Catts, Petscher, Schatschneider, Bridges, Mendoza, 2009).
- Multi-tiered intervention and problem solving approach (Marston, 2005; CEC Position Paper, 2007)
- Scientific, research-based interventions (Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, Scam Macca, Linan-Thompson, Woodruff, 2009).
- Continuous progress monitoring to inform instructional decision making (Lane, Rogers, Parks, Weisenbach, Mau, & Merwin & Bergman, 2007)

- Provisions for referral for a comprehensive evaluation (Moore-Brown, Montgomery, Bielinski & Shubin, 2005; Ofiesh, 2006)

Universal screening measures assess students' academic or behavioral skills or abilities that are predictive of learning and achievement. Early screening is critical so that we do not have a "wait to fail" model. Universally screening students new to school or new to a district can ensure that children are overlooked in the screening process.

RtI is a multi-tiered service model, frequently described as a three-tier model. Tier one consists of research-based curricular instruction for all students. Tier two is research-based intervention designed for students who have demonstrated limited progress in tier one. These students are not achieving at the same rate as the rest of the class. Students who are having difficulty in tier one receive intense tier two intervention to supplement curriculum and instruction in the general education classroom. Tier three is for specific students who do not respond sufficiently in tier two and need even more individualized intense interventions. Tertiary interventions may include special education.

Under an RtI service delivery system, a problem solving team supports targeted students in the general education classroom. They meet and discuss outcome data and determine which intervention is appropriate for individual students. The model emphasizes student performance based on well-defined measures, such as those used in curriculum-based measurement.

Scientific research-based interventions may include direct instruction of strategic instruction. School staff is expected to implement research-based interventions to meet the needs of specific students. Selection of specific interventions is based upon proven success for skills addressed. Staff should examine curriculum options to ensure intervention effectiveness.

Continuous progress monitoring is defined as scientifically based assessment of students' academic performance in all tiers. It is done to determine whether students are making academic or behavioral progress. Progress monitoring can inform the school staff as they develop interventions at the next tier. Measures are directly related to grade and tier level as well as the curriculum.

The referral process ensures that when student performance indicates limited response or success in an earlier tier, a comprehensive evaluation is conducted to determine whether a student has a disability. Students with disabilities, identified as a result of the referral process, will be provided with individualized instruction.

According to Zirkel & Krohn (2008), the 2004 reauthorization of IDEIA effectively removed the longstanding federal requirement to use the aptitude/achievement discrepancy for the identification of SLD, and it now permits RtI to be used as an approach for identification. Specifically, the 2006 IDEIA regulations (300.307)(a) require each state to choose its SLD eligibility "criteria" from among the following options (Zirkel & Krohn, 2008):

- (1) Severe discrepancy (may prohibit or permit),
- (2) RtI (must permit),
- (3) Other alternative research-based procedures--may permit (p.71).

The 28th Annual Report to Congress (2009) remind us that most students with disabilities (96%) spend at least part of each school day in a general education classroom—an average of 4.8 hours per day, meaning that RtI is largely a general education initiative. However, the impact of this new educational policy and legislation affects the roles of *both* general and special education teachers. This results in a challenge to teacher educators, who must revise teacher preparation to meet shifting responsibilities and the change in instructional practice.

Pre-service Teacher Preparation for RtI

A recent search of the literature reveals a dearth of articles on RtI and teacher preparation programs. It may be too early to see the ramifications of this lack of information at the post secondary level, but questions and concerns are bubbling up. In 2007, the Learning Disabilities Association of New York State issued a paper voicing unease with teacher preparation for RtI: “Ensuring teachers are adequately trained to appropriately deliver RtI in a general education classroom is also paramount to the success of RtI and the regulations do not adequately address teacher preparation requirements (p.2).”

Hougen (2008) reviews what specifically needs to be included in general education teacher preparation curriculum. She says, “Rarely have I seen Response to Intervention introduced in the general education pre-service teacher class. Rather it is presented as a special education initiative, though general education has primary responsibility for effective Tier 1 and 2 instruction (p.16).”

The preparation of all educators to assist all students, including those with disabilities, in meaningfully accessing the general curriculum becomes a critical component of successful large-scale implementation of RtI (Bradley, Danielson & Hallahan, 2002). At the university level, this need demands that teacher educators impart the correct knowledge and skills to pre-service teacher candidates. Hougen (2007) asserts that pre-service teachers can benefit from the opportunity to apply RtI principles and techniques as part of their professional preparation. Hougen outlines essential components of a pre-service teacher preparation program as well as professional development models:

- the integration of evidence-based instructional strategies in coursework and professional development modules
- the incorporation of scientifically-based reading instruction (SBRI) in coursework and professional activities
- the use of evaluative tools to determine the integration of SBRI into coursework and professional development .

In order for pre-service to develop skills necessary to RtI implementation, teacher educators must incorporate the essential components of RtI into their course instruction.

The following research examines current teacher educator knowledge and understanding of RtI in order to determine just what is being incorporated into teacher preparation programs, and how.

Methodology

Participants

Eighty-four faculty members from colleges and universities throughout New York State participated in this study. The expertise of respondents spanned general and special education, and included all developmental levels: early childhood, childhood and adolescence. Most participants considered themselves experts in special education with eight to eleven years of experience in higher education. Their departmental affiliation was equitably distributed across general education, special education, and combined programs. Sixty-six percent of the participants had eight to eleven years of experience in higher education. Thirty-one percent reported having seven or fewer years of experience (Table 1).

Table 1.
Demographic of Participants

| Faculty Experience, Expertise & Affiliation | | | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|
| Years of HE Experience | % | Area of Expertise | % | Department Affiliation | % |
| 0-3 years | 6% | Special Ed. | 74% | General Ed | 29% |
| 4-7 years | 25% | Secondary Ed. | 26% | Special Ed | 35% |
| 8-11 years | 65% | Early Childhd | 16% | Sp Ed/Gen Ed | 33% |
| No response | 4% | Ear Ch Spe Ed | 14% | No response | 4% |

| Dept Size & Configuration | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| Size of Dept | % | Ed Dept? | % | Faculty in Dept | % |
| <100 | 12% | Yes | 81% | 1-5 | 19% |
| 100-299 | 36% | No | 17% | 6-10 | 25% |
| 300-499 | 30% | No response | 2% | More than 10 | 52% |
| 500 or > | 30% | | | No Response | 4% |
| No Response | 4% | | | | |

| Type, Size & Location of Institution | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|---------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| Type | % | Size | % | Location | % |
| College/Univ | | | | | |
| Private | 73% | < 1,000 | 1% | Upstate NY | 14% |
| Public | 25% | 1,000 – 2,999 | 26% | Western NY | 14% |
| No Response | 4% | 3,000 – 4,999 | 23% | Northern NY | 7% |
| | | 5,000 or > | 46% | Capital District | 5% |
| | | | | Mid-Hudson | 14% |
| | | | | Long Island | 37% |
| | | | | New York City | 6% |
| | | | | No Response | 2% |

Instrument

Design: The RtI Survey was designed to gather information about teacher educators' knowledge about RtI, sources of their knowledge base, and their plans for teacher training in light of the RtI mandate. A team of researchers crafted the survey questions after careful review of the literature. Specifically, researchers considered the seminal work of O'Connor, Harty, & Fulmer (2005) Horowitz (1999), Bradley et al., (2007), and the Council for Exceptional Children's position paper (2007) on RtI.

Items were presented in two formats: multiple-choice (55%) and multiple response (45%). Content-related survey items were divided into three categories: eleven items pertained to faculty knowledge about RtI; five items to how faculty developed their knowledge-base about RtI, and four items to how faculty think RtI has/will influence teacher preparation program changes (Figure 1.) In consultation with an instrument specialist, the presentation of items was carefully planned and readjusted to ensure that item stems and response options were construct consistent.

Figure 1.

Overview of Survey to Teacher Educators

| Category | Description | Percent |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Item Formats: | Multiple choice | 55% (11) |
| | Multiple Response | 45% (9) |
| Focus of Survey Items | Faculty knowledge about RtI: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• progress monitoring• interventions appropriate to progress monitoring• responsibility for tier 1 & 2 intervention• expected outcome of RtI—student performance• expected outcome of RtI—referral rate | 55 % (11) 25% (5) |
| | Source of knowledge base: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• primary source• hours spent in knowledge building• motivation to seek information about RtI | 20% (4) |
| | Plans for Teacher Prep programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• importance of RtI for pre-service teachers• professional responsibility for preparing teachers for progress monitoring• how RtI has changed/will change teacher preparation programs | |

Web-based Survey: The computer-based survey was created with SNAP software. Researchers chose to use a web-based survey for a number of reasons: 1) our

audience of teacher educators use the Internet extensively and therefore we felt that this medium would yield a higher response rate and 2) the electronic format allowed for thoughtful responding at a preferred pace, without immediate time constraints (Chang & Krosnick, 2002). Use of this electronic medium allows researchers to eliminate the expense of paper distribution and the challenge of the low or no-response rate often typical of paper surveys. Educators use the World Wide Web as a research tool to acquire and disseminate valuable information. It also affords researchers the opportunity to expand their target sample without the cost of duplication and mailing (Dix & Anderson, 2000).

Preparation of the survey for a web-based format led researchers to a web-based instrument consultant. Consultation resulted in changes to the initial survey format (placement of demographic items) and presentation (font size and type, background display, and navigation tools) before piloting the instrument.

Piloting & Instrument Revision: The survey was sent to a pilot group of 20 higher education faculty involved in general and special teacher education at the graduate and undergraduate level, in and outside the state of New York. These individuals were selected based upon their expertise in learning disabilities, evidence-based practices, progress monitoring, and/or the implementation of educational mandates. The response rate was 30% for this pilot study. Feedback from the pilot led researchers to: 1) make wording changes, 2) reorganize items, and 3) include an additional item to the final instrument.

Wording changes were made to items specific to responsibility for implementation by tier. Items were rewritten to elicit opinions of participants (i.e., “Who is most responsible ...” to “Who, do you think, is responsible ...”), to more clarify item wording (i.e., “In your opinion, who is primarily responsible for the second tier of RTI?” to “In your opinion, who is primarily responsible for implementing further intervention when the initial intervention does not result in adequate progress?”).

Reorganization of response options, question parameters, and overall organization of the survey was changed to ensure that like concepts and ideas were organized linearly. Item stems were also changed to elicit multiple and singular responses to instrument items. Finally, the item, “What are the key elements of RtI?” was added to the faculty knowledge section of the instrument.

Data Collection

The survey was emailed to faculty at the researchers’ institution with a link to the computer-based survey. Four weeks later, the survey was sent to 287 members of the New York State Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change (NYSHESC) and the Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling. All responses were recorded electronically through the SNAP web-based survey. A total of 84 surveys were completed and returned after two mailings, yielding a 29% response rate. No further follow-up of non-responders was conducted.

The criteria for including returned surveys were: 1) response to item number one (How familiar are you with the Response to Intervention (RtI) mandate?) and 2) completion of at least 75% of survey items. All of the surveys received met these criteria.

Data Analysis

Three measures were derived from participant responses: Faculty Knowledge, Knowledge Base, and Program Changes. The “Faculty Knowledge Score” represents the total correct/acceptable item responses on this section of the instrument. This score reflects participants’ grasp of the tenets of RtI as presented in IDEIA 2004. The “Knowledge Base Score” represents respondents’ efforts to gather information and training about RtI. This score reflects participants’ level of commitment to learning about RtI. Lastly, the “Program Change Score” corresponds to the influence of the RtI measure on teacher preparation programs. This score shows how participants have changed or plan to change teacher preparation programs as a result of the RtI mandate.

To establish the reliability of instrument items, item analysis statistical tests yielded Cronbach’s Alpha of .785. Researchers were unable to establish predictive validity of the instrument at the time of this study, because no standardized test was readily available to assess similar knowledge of university professions on this topic.

A Multi-variate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical test was run to determine whether there are significant differences between the means scores of survey participants on three dependent measures: Faculty Knowledge Score, Knowledge Base Score, and Program Change Score. Two independent variables, Areas of Specialization and Self-reported Familiarity, were employed for this test. Wilks lambda results are reported for tests with a significance level of .05.

Results

A two-way MANOVA was computed for specialization and familiarity on Faculty Knowledge, Knowledge Base, and Program Change. Significant differences were yielded for familiarity with RtI: Wilks’ lambda $F(9,72)=5.045, p=.000$. Results of the MANOVA are presented in a skeletal source table (Table 2).

Table 2.*Skeletal Source Table Familiarity x Specialization*

| Multivariate Analyses | | | | Univariate Analyses | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|---------------------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| Source | <i>df</i> | <u>F</u> | <i>p</i> | <i>df</i> | Fac Knowl | | Knowl Base | | Tchr Prep Prog Change | |
| | | | | | <u>F</u> | <i>p</i> | <u>F</u> | <i>p</i> | <u>F</u> | <i>p</i> |
| Specializ | 6, 142 | 0.174 | .983 | 2,73 | | .872 | 0.309 | .735 | 0.110 | .896 |
| | | | | | 0.137 | | | | | |
| Familiarity | 9, 72 | 5.045 | .000 | 3,73 | 6.046 | .001 | 10.139 | .000 | 2.649 | .055 |
| Spec x Familiar | 15,196 | 0.492 | .943 | 5,73 | 0.557 | .733 | 0.415 | .837 | 0.445 | .816 |
| | | | <i>p</i> =.05 | | | | | | | |

Univariate tests indicated a significant difference for Faculty Knowledge and Knowledge Base by familiarity: Faculty Knowledge $F(3, 73)=6.046$, $p=.001$; Knowledge Base $F(3,73)=10.139$, $p=.000$.

Means reported in Table 3 indicate a significant difference by familiarity. Participants who were very familiar with RtI yielded high mean scores for Knowledge and Knowledge Base. The more familiar participants were with RtI, the greater their Knowledge and Knowledge Base means.

Table 3.
Familiarity: Mean Scores by Dependent Measures

| Familiarity | | Faculty Knowledge | Knowledge Base | Program Change |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Very Familiar | Mean | 22.19 | 7.08 | 8.08 |
| | n | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| | Std. Deviation | 2.980 | 1.896 | 2.331 |
| Familiar | Mean | 21.09 | 5.91 | 6.86 |
| | n | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| | Std. Deviation | 3.861 | 1.788 | 2.088 |
| Somewhat Familiar | Mean | 20.12 | 3.76 | 7.59 |
| | n | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| | Std. Deviation | 5.711 | 1.921 | 3.222 |
| Not Familiar at All | Mean | 11.00 | 1.00 | 3.50 |
| | n | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Std. Deviation | 9.077 | 1.265 | 3.728 |
| Total | Mean | 20.51 | 5.49 | 7.14 |
| | n | 84 | 84 | 84 |
| | Std. Deviation | 5.256 | 2.476 | 2.751 |

After specialization yielded no significant difference in the two-way MANOVA, a one-way MANOVA was run for specialization on three dependent variables: Faculty Knowledge, Knowledge Base, and Program Changes to determine if there were differences by area of specialization.

Results indicate significant differences: Walk's lambda $F(6,158)=3.145$, $p=.006$. Univariate tests indicated a significant difference on Faculty Knowledge and Knowledge Base: Faculty Knowledge $F(2,81)=3.885$, $p=.024$; Knowledge Base $F(2,81)=8.1555$, $p=.001$.

The pattern of means reported in Table 4 indicates a significant difference in participants with specialty. Special educators yielded higher mean scores for Knowledge. Participants with dual specializations yielded higher Knowledge Base means. The mean scores for Knowledge and Knowledge Base for general educators were lower than the mean scores of educators who specialize in special education or educators who specialize in special education and general education.

Table 4.
Specialization: Mean Scores by Dependent Variables

| Area of Specialty | | Faculty Knowledge | Knowledge Base | Program Change |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Gen Ed | Mean | 17.85 | 3.75 | 6.05 |
| | n | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| | Std. Deviation | 7.400 | 2.693 | 3.720 |
| Sp Ed | Mean | 21.69 | 5.81 | 7.60 |
| | n | 42 | 42 | 42 |
| | Std. Deviation | 3.960 | 2.110 | 2.528 |
| Dual Specialization | Mean | 20.68 | 6.45 | 7.27 |
| | n | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| | Std. Deviation | 4.412 | 2.220 | 1.830 |
| Total | Mean | 20.51 | 5.49 | 7.14 |
| | n | 84 | 84 | 84 |
| | Std. Deviation | 5.256 | 2.476 | 2.751 |

Summary

Results indicate a significant difference in means for Faculty Knowledge and Knowledge Base by the two independent variables: area of specialization and self-reported familiarity. Special educators knew more about RtI. Individuals with dual specialization (general education and special education) had a more extensive knowledge base. There was no significant difference in means for program change for either the two independent variables.

Discussion

When examining faculty knowledge of RtI, 72% of respondents reported that they were "very familiar" or "familiar" with RtI. Although a majority indicates a high level of familiarity, it is a concern that five years after the introduction of RtI in IDEIA (2004), 28% of teacher educators report that they are "somewhat familiar" or "not familiar at all."

The implications for teacher preparation programs cannot be ignored. As public schools are scrambling to implement an RtI model, there is the expectation that recent education graduates will be ready to take part in the process. Without knowledge, faculty cannot design appropriate teacher preparation programs that meet the needs of public schools. As a result the gap between higher education and public schools widens.

Mellard & Johnson (2008) stated that the establishment of the RtI model represents a major shift in the roles and responsibilities of educators and their professional development, and greater collaboration between general and special educators. These changes extend to teacher education programs and the need for faculty to educate themselves about RtI so they can correctly inform their pre-service programs. Special educators and educators with dual specialization in special and general education, sought

out more resources and training than general educators. Whether this finding is a result of not viewing RtI as a general education mandate is not clear. Because RtI is written into the IDEIA (2004) legislation some general educators may not realize it is a general education mandate. They may also not understand their role in the process or the affect on instruction in their individual classrooms.

Kings-Sears, Boudah, Goodwin, Raskind, Swanson, (2004) ask [if] "We depend on truly highly qualified teachers to carry out RtI interventions... where are these people and how do they become 'highly qualified'? He further contends that "those who conduct teacher training and professional development must provide training and support through traditional and alternative models of teacher education (p.79)."

All respondents except those reporting no familiarity with RtI, recognize the need to incorporate the RtI model/mandate into teacher preparation. A very high percent, 93%, of teacher educators understand the importance of RtI to their teacher education programs. However, this study suggests that teacher educators have not yet made significant changes in the planning of teacher preparation programs. Unless attention is given to needed changes, teacher preparation programs will evidence a widening disconnect between higher education and schools across the United States.

Further Study

This study focuses on the knowledge and knowledge base of teacher educators in higher education. They represent only one set of stakeholders impacted by RtI. Further study is needed to examine the knowledge and knowledge based of classroom teachers and school administrators. Further study should also examine the fidelity of RtI implementation in public schools. In addition, research is needed to examine practitioners' knowledge & practice relative to RtI. Longitudinal research could examine the timeframe needed to systematically implement RtI and other educational mandates pertinent to educational reform.

Conclusion

This study is a first step toward establishing the current knowledge level of faculty and the evolving needs for teacher preparation with respect to response to intervention. Results provide a positive window into the current state of faculty knowledge, teacher education and pre-service teacher curriculum. However, it is only an initial look into an evolving process.

Thirty years ago, the intent of the Education for the Handicapped Act (EHA) was to find children, assess them, and place them in categorical programs (Prasse, 2006). Today, the intent of federal legislation focuses on student outcomes and performance, and access to quality instruction and learning. RtI has emerged as the model to implement this change. It is considered "a valuable model for educators because of its potential utility in the provision of appropriate learning experiences for all students as well as in the early identification of students as being at risk for academic failure (Johnson & Smith, 2008; p

46)." This dramatic change in the special education delivery system requires an equally compelling change in the way we prepare future teachers.

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Bullying Experiences, Anxiety About Bullying, and Special Education Placement

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Abstract

Bullying experiences and self-reported anxiety about bullying and were compared in 72 elementary and middle school students including 16 in self contained (SC) special education classes, 20 receiving resource or consultation (RC), and 36 matched peers. Individually administered Bully Victimization Scale and School Violence Anxiety Scale scores (Reynolds, 2003) revealed that children with special needs (both SC & RC) tended to report more peer victimization and higher anxiety about school violence than matched peers from the same schools. Placement was not related to self-reported bullying experiences. Students in self-contained classes were significantly more anxious about possible bullying, especially physical, in spite of being in more protected environments. School placement is an important but under-researched issue in assessment and intervention for bullying of students receiving special education services.

Bullying Experiences, Anxiety About Bullying, and Special Education Placement

Research suggests that children with special needs (CSN) in special education placements may be at elevated risk for bullying experiences. Van Cleave and Davis (2006) examined epidemiology data on over 102,000 CSN ages 6-17. Results suggest that CSN were significantly more likely than non-CSN to be victimized by peers and significantly more likely to be bullies. CSN were twice as likely to meet the criteria of a bully-victim as their non-CSN counterparts and having a behavioral, emotional, or developmental problem is associated to bullying others and being a bully-victim. Twyman, Macias, Saia, Saylor, Spratt, & Taylor (2009) interviewed 312 summer pediatric clinic patients

aged 8-17 about their bullying experiences in the previous school year and found that risk for peer victimization was significantly higher for all CSN compared to peers with no diagnoses who were seen in primary care clinics. Specifically, odds ratio analyses indicated that patients with autistic spectrum disorder were 4.43 times more likely to report peer victimization, patients with ADHD were 4.46 times more likely, and patients with documented learning disabilities were 3.46 times more likely.

Mishna (2003) reviewed studies linking bullying and Learning Disability (LD), concluding that the combination of LD and bullying places students in “double jeopardy”. More specifically, the research revealed that children and adolescents with learning disabilities are at-risk of both peer victimization and bullying others. Characteristics of LD that include difficulties with language, attention, information processing, and problems with interpreting social information may be interfering with the development of well-adjusted social relationships with peers. Taylor, Saylor, Twyman, & Macias (in press) examined self-reported bullying and peer victimization in pediatric populations of 238 youth aged 8-17 diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Results suggested that students diagnosed with ADHD are at significantly higher risk for peer victimization and its psychological impact; youth with ADHD who experience bullying- as victims, bullies, or both- are more likely to have psychosocial problems beyond their attention and social competence difficulties.

Thompson, Whitney, and Smith (1994) conducted a study examining incidences of bullying among children 186 8-16 year-old primary and secondary students- 93 with special education needs and 93 without special education needs. Results from teacher and peer interview data showed that CSN receiving special education services were much more likely to be bullied than were the mainstream children with whom they were compared. Children with moderate learning difficulties were victimized more than children with mild learning difficulties. Besides levels of functioning, the visibility of CSN disabilities may also be a predictive factor in their risk to be bullied (Carter & Spencer, 2006).

In addition to research findings, there have been several publicized incidents where CSN were brutally bullied by their peers. For example, a 14-year-old student in special education stabbed an older classmate because he was frustrated by what he recalled as “months of bullying and harassment” by the seventeen year old student he stabbed (Patterson, 2005). In Philadelphia, a 12-year old student diagnosed as mildly mentally disabled, autistic, and partially deaf, was physically bullied and harassed regularly by his classmates, which included a cell-phone videotape recording posted on MySpace by his attackers displaying them repeatedly rubbing their crotch on his head while a group of peers and an adult-figure observed the cruel behavior (DiFilippo, 2008).

Several researchers have focused on skill deficits and social competence as potential reasons for the increased bullying vulnerability of CSN. Kavale and Forness (1996) suggested that rejection and low acceptance of children with learning disabilities (LD) were related to a lack of communication (verbal and nonverbal) and ability to empathize with others. Similarly, Hugh-Jones and Smith (1999) examined the nature, frequency,

and causes of bullying among children who stammer, along with short and long-term effects of their victimization. Their sample included 276 teenagers and adults who stammer, 83% of whom reported being bullied in school. Hugh-Jones et al. (1999) findings suggest that bullying and peer relationship difficulties are common in dysfluent children's school experiences; the difficulties are correlated with their dysfluency. More recently, learning skills, social intelligence, and self-concept were all found to be correlated to each other and to bully/victim issues in 141 fifth-grade children (Kaukiainen et al., 2002). The results support the theory that children with LD have problems in their peer relations and are bullies more often than their classmates. It was also suggested that a certain level of social competence is required for making and maintaining social relations, and for protecting oneself against bullying (Kaukiainen et al., 2002).

Opportunities for positive social interactions with peers may be a protective factor against bullying and fear of bullying for CSN in special education placements. Saylor & Leach (2009) examined bullying fears and experiences of 24 students in self-contained LD classrooms and 24 peers who participated in a year-long middle-school and community-based program that combined the two populations for inclusive arts, sports, and community service programs. The students in special education classrooms were significantly higher than hand-picked peer participants in both self-reported victimization and fear of victimization at the beginning of the program. They showed significant declines in both by the end of 24 weeks but the change was not great enough to make their experiences and fears comparable to those of the peer volunteers.

Family issues and emotional/behavioral problems have also been examined as sources of bullying vulnerability in CSN. Baumeister, Storch, and Geffken (2008) examined the nature and psychosocial relationship of peer victimization in a clinical sample of children diagnosed with a Learning Disability (LD). The study involved 303 patient charts from a university child psychiatry clinic, and 77 participants that met LD diagnostic criteria. The findings from this study suggested that peer victimization was positively related with parent problems, attention problems, and disruptive behavior. Peer victimization among children diagnosed with LD is significantly associated with reports of withdrawal, anxiety, depression, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, and disruptive behavior. In addition, children with LD who had comorbid psychiatric diagnoses reported more peer victimization than children without a comorbid psychiatric condition (Baumeister et al. 2008). Humphrey, Storch, and Geffken (2007) found a correlation between these factors in a sample of children diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Like Baumeister et al. (2008), Humphrey et al. (2007) also found that CSN with additional comorbid psychiatric diagnoses reported higher rates of peer victimization than those without a comorbid diagnosis.

Although individual student characteristics and family context have been examined as factors in bullying of CSN, few studies have examined level of day-to-day social interaction (inclusion) of CSN peers as a potential source of vulnerability or as a protective factor. In spite of obvious social and practical implications, placement in self-contained versus mainstreamed environments has been under-studied as a factor in CSN report of bullying experiences. The purpose of this study was to further examine bullying experiences, anxiety about bullying, and special education placement in elementary and middle school students with and without disabilities. The study compares CSN placed in

self-contained/remedial classrooms, CSN who are mainstreamed into general education classrooms, and students (peers) in general education classrooms.

Method

Participants

Potential participants were included if they met four criteria: a) parents provided informed consent; b) students demonstrated willingness to participate and appeared to the research assistant to understand questions and provide comprehensible answers; c) students were 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th or 8th grade students that attend one of the four target schools, and d) students had identifiable placement in regular classes, resource classes, consultation for learning support, or self-contained classes. For three of the four public schools the procedures were identical. Letters describing the study, demographic questionnaires, and requests for participation were sent to the parents of youth who were in target grades or in special education classes in participating schools. Interested parents returned consents directly to investigators by mail. The resulting pool of potential participants in the first three schools included 151 elementary students and 96 middle school students ranging in age from 8 to 16. Potential participants at the fourth school were students that previously participated in a pilot extracurricular inclusion program 1-2 hours a week (Saylor et al., 2009). As in the other schools, letters were sent from school and returned by mail. However, participation was only offered to the youth in special education and student volunteers offering to be peers in the new program. It was emphasized that declining to participate in the research protocol would in no way influence selection for the inclusion program. In all, 24 of the 46 program participants elected to complete the protocol, 15 CSN and nine peers.

Thus, within the combined sample of 271 from four schools there were a total of 42 participants receiving special education services (CSN), 20 students through resource or consultation service (CSN-RC), and 22 in a self-contained classroom setting (CSN-SC). Out of the 22 participants from a self-contained setting, 16 of the participants had their results reexamined and were added to the present study's analysis following the conclusion of a different pilot study researching bullying experiences, fear of school violence, and social support of students only in self-contained classes (Saylor et al., 2009). In order to make the cleanest comparisons possible each CSN was matched with a peer from the same school whose gender, age, and race were comparable. Six of the CSN-SC students from the fourth school (inclusion program) sample were not included because they could not be matched to a peer in their own school, a criterion thought to be crucial in the study of bullying. Subsequent analyses of results with and without these six SC students yielded comparable findings but this study reports only on the 36 CSN (almost) perfectly matched to a peer in the same school- 20 CSN-RC and 16 CSN-SC. Six of the children were not a perfect match on age, due largely to the fact that some children in special education were older than most others in their school. In the final sample, *t*-tests revealed no significant age differences between students in special education and matched peers. Two were not a perfect match on race.

The final sample of 72 students included 50 males and 22 females, 74% of whom were Caucasian and 26% of whom were African American. The 44 middle school and 28 elementary school children ranged in age from 8-16, with a mean of 11.6 years. The parent population included 54% college graduates and 73% who were married. The CSN sample consisted of youth with a variety of disabilities. Primary diagnoses (n=36) and secondary diagnoses (n=18) obtained from the participating school district's records revealed that the sample included 9 students with a moderate mental disability, 5 students with a mild mental disability, 21 students with a documented learning disability, 10 students with speech impairment, 3 students with an emotional disability, 4 students with an orthopedic impairment, and 2 students with autism.

Measures

This study utilized the *Bully Victimization Scale* (BVS) (Reynolds, 2003), which is used to measure bullying behavior and bully-victimization experiences in children and adolescents by having them report the frequency of 46 specific experiences or behaviors on a Likert scale. The BVS is designed for administration with third to twelfth grade students, and takes approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. The BVS is used to identify children and adolescents who are being bullied (Victimization Scale) and also students who engage in bullying behavior (Bullying Scale). Psychometric analyses in the standardization sample of 2,000 students demonstrated a strong internal consistency reliability coefficient of .93 for both the BVS Bully Scale and the BVS Victimization Scale. There is also good evidence of content and construct validity in the general population sampled (Reynolds, 2003).

For this study *T*-scores were calculated relative to grade and gender using BVS norm tables. The CSN in "ungraded" classes were scored based on their age (calculated at the grade most children start at that age). Students were categorized as having significantly elevated victimization or bully scores if their *T*-scores were > 60, which is one standard deviation above the mean.

The School Violence Anxiety Scale (SVAS) (Reynolds, 2003) is used to assess student's perception of school violence and safety in grades fifth through twelfth grade. In the present study, SVAS was used to assess only students attending middle school (6th-8th grades). The SVAS evaluates students' level of anxiety about their school environment, including anxiety specific to physical harm at school, harassment at school, and the potential for violence occurring at school. SVAS items assess physiological, cognitive, and emotional parts of anxiety (Reynolds, 2003). SVAS total raw score has a high internal consistency reliability coefficient of .95. There is evidence of content and construct validity. For this study the SVAS Total *T*-score was considered significantly elevated if it was > 60. The three factor scores were compared as raw scores as *T*-scores were not available for factors.

Demographic questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was filled-out by parent/caregiver respondent which included participant's mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, grandmother, or other relative. The questions referred to participant's gender,

race, age, school, parent-reported diagnoses, family income, parents' level of education, and parents' marital status.

Procedure

Teachers in target classrooms were asked to send home parental consent forms with their students. Faculty and graduate students from the authors' college conducted face-to-face interviews with properly consented students. Interviews consisted of verbatim reading of the instruments and writing down the students' verbal answers. They took place in either the participant's school library or in another quiet location within their school environment. The interview session took approximately 15 to 20 minutes per student. After each interview, participants were given an opportunity to pick a prize or candy for their participation.

Results

Bullying and Victimization of Students Relative to Special Education Placement

Grade and gender norms for the BVS (Reynolds, 2003) were used to compute Bullying and Victimization *T*-scores. These scores in turn were used to create bully-group categories based on significantly elevated scores (*T*-score >60) on neither scale (Minimally Exposed) Bully only (Bully), Victim only (Victim) or both Bully and Victim (Bully-victim). This process allowed for a rigorous and norm-referenced test of the hypothesis that CSN in special education placements (CSN-SC, CSN-RC) would experience higher rates of bullying compared to relative to match peers. Specifically chi square analyses were used to examine significant patterns of placement group assignment categories by bully group assignment categories (minimal bullying exposure, Bully, Victim, Bully-Victim). When *T*-scores could not be calculated, e.g. on SVAS subscale scores, Analysis of Variance ANOVA was used to compare raw scores of school placement groups.

When compared to participants matched by school, gender, race, and age (as closely as possible), a higher percentage of students in any special education placement (CSN) reported significant levels of victimization (*t*-score > 60) on the BVS victim scale. Chi square analyses showed this to be a significant pattern, $\chi^2 (72) = 6.55, p < .02$. In all, 44% of the CSN reported significantly elevated victimization experiences while only 17% of the peers reached this level. Chi square analyses were also used to further compare the victimization scores of students in self-contained classes (CSN-SC), students in resource or consultation (CSN-RC), and peers. The chi square analysis revealed significant placement differences, $\chi^2 (72) = 6.96, p < .03$. Unlike matched peers, 17% of whom had significantly elevated scores, 40% of CSN-RC and 50% of CSN-SC had significantly elevated BVS victimization scores.

All three groups reported relatively low rates of bullying – peers (8.3%), CSN-RC (10%), and BVS-SC (0 %). Chi square analyses revealed no significant differences in the

percentage of each group admitting to bullying others and significantly elevated rates (BVS bully score > 60).

A final chi square analysis compared the rates at which peers versus CSN were categorized into four bully-victimization groups based on BVS *T*-scores: “Victim” only (victim score >60), “Bully” only (bully score > 60), “Bully-Victim” (both scores > 60), or minimally exposed to bullying (neither score > 60). A chi square analysis showed a significant difference between CSN (RC & SC combined) and peers, $\chi^2 (72) = 7.93, p < .05$. It appeared in this analysis that only peers reported bullying alone. Both of the CSN who admitted to engaging in bullying were also Victims (Bully-victims).

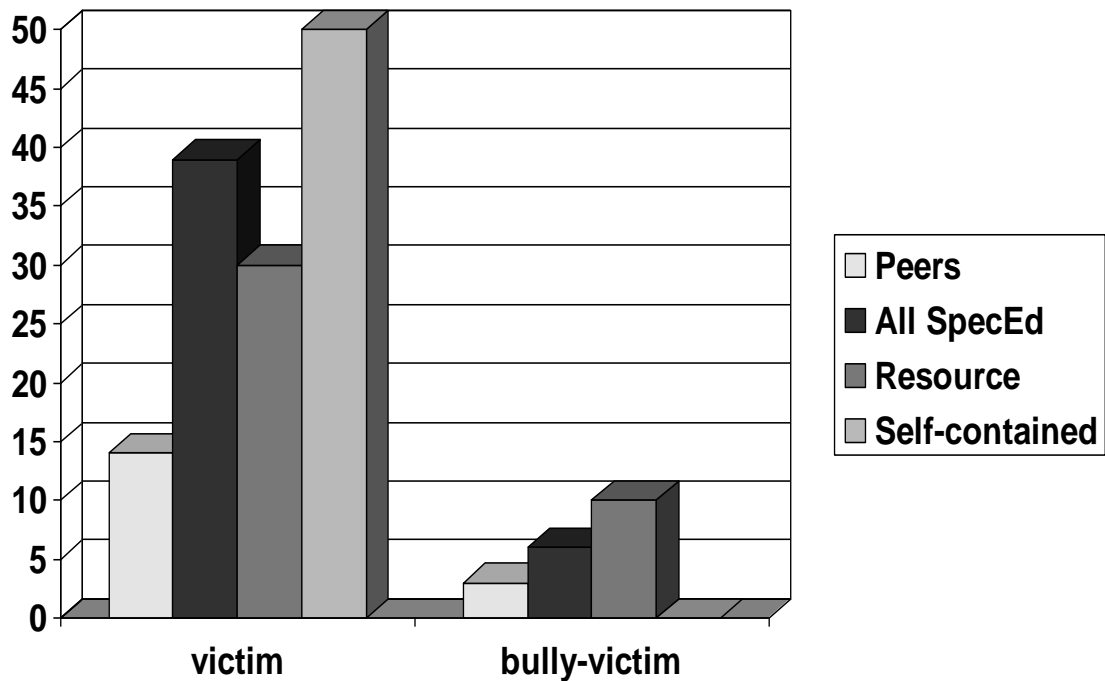
There were trends but no significant differences in the three-way comparison (peer, CSN-RC, and CSN-SC) on assignment to the four bully groups, $\chi^2 (72) = 11.54, p < .07$. Two of the participants who fell in the Bully-Victim group were CSN-RC and one was a peer. No CSN-SC reported bullying others. The small numbers prohibited more in-depth analysis of these findings, but it raised the possibility that a second vulnerability of CSN-RC may be the tendency to becoming a bully-victim, perhaps subsequent to being a victim. Figure 1 depicts the percent of each population whose significantly elevated BVS scores categorized them as Victims or Bully-Victims, while table 1 summarizes the percentage of each placement group which was categorized in each victimization group.

Table 1

Summary of Percentages of Each of Three Placement Groups that Were Categorized as Minimally Exposed, Victims, Bullies, and Bully-Victims

| | CSN–SC n = 16 % | CSN–RC n = 20 % | Matched Peers n = 36 % | Total Sample N = 72 % |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Minimal | 50 | 60 | 78 | 67 |
| Victim Only | 50 | 30 | 14 | 26 |
| Bully Only | 0 | 0 | 6 | 3 |
| Bully-Victim | 0 | 10 | 2 | 4 |

Figure 1. Percentages of student placement groups categorized into Victim only, or Bully-Victim groups based on BVS t-scores > 60



Anxiety about School Violence in Middle School Relative to Special Education Placement

In similar fashion, chi square analyses were also used to compare the groupings based on SVAS total *T*-scores of CSN and peers in the 44 middle school students who completed this measure. As a group the CSN were more likely to report significantly elevated anxiety on this measure than their peers at the same school, $\chi^2(44) = 5.94, p < .02$. The three way comparison among placement groups yielded a significant pattern as well, $\chi^2(44) = 15.28, p < .001$. While only 9% of the peers and 10% of the CSN-RC reported significantly high levels of anxiety about being victimized by peers, 67% of the CSN-SC endorsed items at these high levels. Figure 2 summarizes placement group rates of categorization based on SVAS Total score. Elevated versus non-elevated *T*-scores cannot be calculated for the factor scores

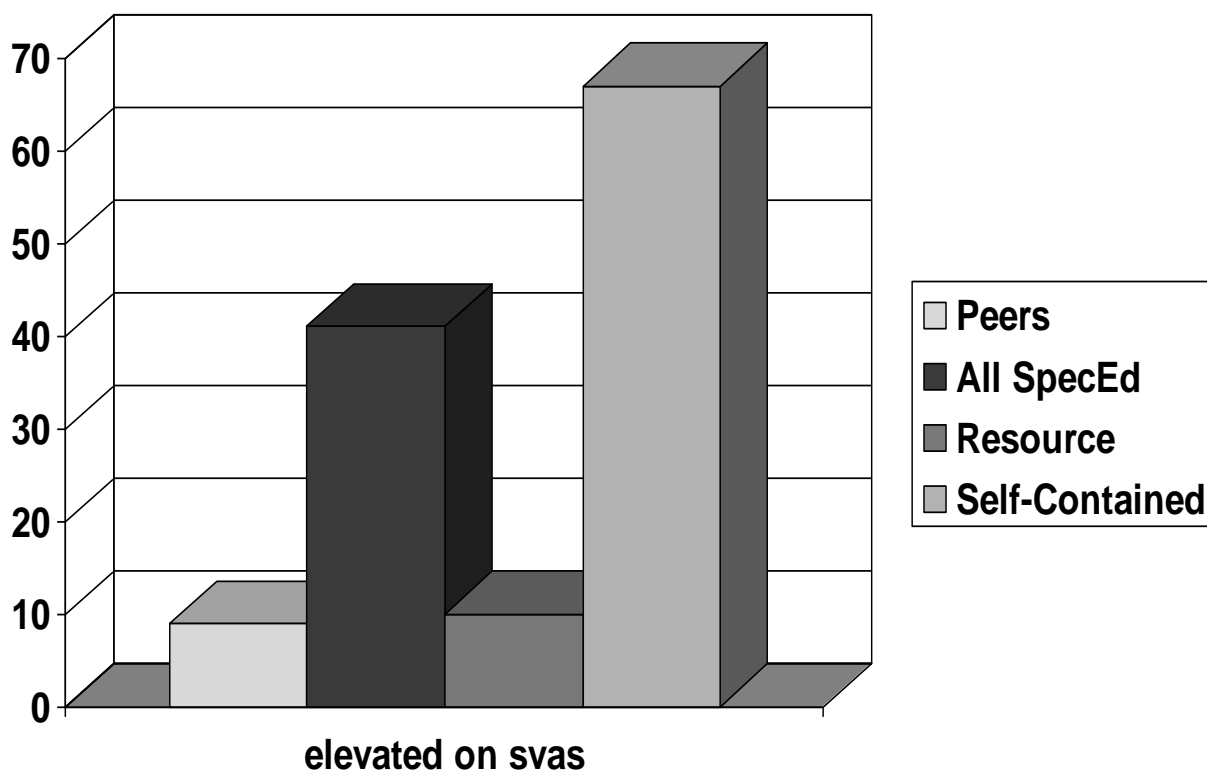
Analyses of variance with Duncan post hoc tests revealed more specific patterns to these placement differences. The significant difference in the total SVAS *T*-score [$F(2,41)=5.27, p<.009$] appeared to be primarily related to the CSN-SC group's extremely high scores on the Physical Injury Anxiety factor. The CSN-SC had a mean Physical Injury Anxiety raw score of 10.9 compared to 4.9 for CSN-RC and 2.7 for peers, which resulted in significant differences on this factor, $F(2,41)=4.64, p<.02$. The three placement groups did not differ significantly on the *Fear of Harassment* or *Worry about School Safety* factors. Table 2 summarizes ANOVA comparisons of SVAS scores.

Table 2

Summary of ANOVA's Comparing SVAS Factor Scores and Total T-score of Middle School Students in Three Placement Groups

| | CSN-SC <i>n</i> = 12 | CSN-RC <i>n</i> = 10 | Matched Peers <i>n</i> = 22 | <i>df</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> < |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Fear of Harrassment factor raw score | 5.2 | 4.2 | 2.7 | 2, 43 | 1.85 | .17 |
| Physical Injury Anxiety factor raw score | 10.9 | 4.9 | 3.0 | 2, 43 | 4.64 | .02 |
| Worry About School Safety factor raw score | 3.7 | 3.2 | 2.3 | 2, 43 | 1.12 | .33 |
| SVAS Total <i>T</i> -score | 61.0 | 52.6 | 49.6 | 2, 43 | 5.27 | .009 |

Figure 2. Percentage of middle school student placement groups reporting significantly elevated anxiety about school victimization based on SVAS total t-score >60



Demographic factors potentially associated with Bullying and Victimization

The matching of subjects in this study based on gender, age, race, and same school environment was based on awareness of these factors as potential correlates of bullying and victimization in previous literature and pilot research. To further examine these issues in the present sample, chi square analyses were conducted to compare bully and victim classifications by gender, race, and Middle School (MS) vs Elementary School (ES). In this sample girls were significantly more likely to admit to bullying others, $\chi^2(72) = 6.19, p < .02$, and three of four girls admitting to significant bullying were categorized as Bully-Victims, not simply Bullies. There were no gender differences in rates of elevated victimization (BVS Victim) or anxiety about victimization (SVAS).

There were also no differences in BVS Bully, BVS Victim or SVAS elevation rates in Caucasian vs. African American students or in MS vs. ES students.

Discussion

The present study found higher rates of perceived peer victimization among students receiving special education services in carefully matched samples of students in the same middle and elementary schools. Both students with special needs receiving resource or consultation in a mainstreamed environment (CSN-RC) and students receiving their special education services primarily in self-contained placements (CSN-SC) reported higher rates of victimization compared to peers of the same race, age, and gender in the same schools. Although their reports of actual bullying and victimization experiences were more or less comparable (to each other; both groups were higher than peers), the CSN-RC and CSN-SC were markedly different in their reported fear or anxiety about being victimized, especially physically injured, by their peers. CSN-SC, whose day-to-day involvement with peers was much more limited (usually just lunch and physical education, if that) reported significantly higher levels of anxiety that their peers might hurt them compared to either CSN-RC or peers, who presumably have more day-to-day peer social interaction.

Previous studies (e.g. Baumeister et al. 2008, Cater & Spencer, 2006, Humphrey et al. 2007) found higher rates of bullying experienced by CSN and have explored specific personal characteristics that might make a person with special needs more vulnerable to being a target for bullying (e.g. differences in appearance, speech difficulties, social skill deficits, difficulty cognitive processing of events). Whatever personal characteristics CSN bring to the peer interaction, the fact that students in self contained special education classes were significantly higher on fear scores than students receiving their special education services using mainstreamed resource or consultation models suggest that at least the apprehension of peer victimization may be minimized by the greater exposure provided by more inclusive environments.

Unlike previous researchers (e.g. Kaukiainen et al., 2002) this sample demonstrated no significant elevations in the self-reported rates of bullying by CSN. Indeed, no CSN-SC reported elevated bullying behavior beyond what is normative for their grade and gender, and the few CSN-RC who reported bullying others at high rates were also high in victimization. Future investigations should be attentive to methodological and sampling issues which may lead to varied conclusions about CSN as bullies. Across methods, data sources, and diagnoses of CSN, the increased vulnerability of CSN to be victims relative to peers is a robust and consistent finding that mandates further studies in prevention and intervention with these populations.

Generalization and interpretation of these findings are certainly limited by the small sample size and diverse diagnoses of the participants. However, several emerging trends suggest important areas of further investigation. One is the relatively high rate at which CSN-RC are represented among the students whose scores categorize them as “Bully-Victims”. In this sample no special education students were categorized as “Bullies”

alone. Any who admitted to significant levels of bullying also reported significant levels of victimization. The fact that girls were also more likely to be bully-victims in this sample suggests that future studies need to factor gender and other demographic characteristics into analyses as sample sizes allow. While most of the sparse literature in bullying of CSN has addressed prevention of the initial victimization, it may also be important to look at secondary prevention for CSN who have known victimization incidents to prevent their becoming bullies as well. Taylor, Saylor, Twyman, and Macias (in press) have suggested that students with ADHD may be vulnerable to this same combination of bullying and victimization. Perhaps being developmentally immature and/or more impulsive makes some CSN more likely to react to peer bullying with aggression toward others without fully estimating the impact or the consequences of their own bullying behaviors.

This study examined the perceptions of youth with special needs in integrated (resource/consultative services) and isolated (self-contained) school settings. Further research is needed to examine the perceptions of children and adolescents receiving special education in elementary and middle school. Based on this preliminary study, we recommend that school districts continue in their efforts to prevent school bullying for all their students, but especially for those students in special education classes who may be most vulnerable to victimization caused by bullying and worry about victimization. School boards need to develop effective policies, procedures, and preventive education for staff and students. Principals need to ensure that their schools are fully inclusive and take a leading role in demonstrating contagious attitudes and behaviors that will benefit all students in a positive manner. Teachers need to feel confident in their knowledge and skills in order to socially include students with or without special needs. As a society, we all need to appreciate children, adolescents, and adults for their uniqueness in order to better understand the realities of their disability. In school and within our homes we all have an opportunity to model behavior and attitudes that we want our children to take with them into public situations. Overall, we need to provide the necessary educational policies and resources to guarantee that all children with or without a disability are respected and treated fairly.

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What Do Children Learn About Prosocial Behavior from the Media?

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Abstract

The paper discusses the importance of prosocial behavior from the media and its effects on children. The paper reviews several research studies on prosocial and media on children. The paper also offers implications and limitations dealing with prosocial behavior and media on children.

What Do Children Learn About Prosocial Behavior from the Media?

In 1970, Lesser asserted that children spend more of their time watching television than sleeping. Over the years there has been an increasing awareness in the importance of children's television. Pearl, Bouthilet, and Lazar (1982) contended that children learn prosocial behaviors from television. Hence, the objective of this paper is to describe some of the research literature dealing with media, prosocial behavior, and its effects on children.

Rushton (1982) defined prosocial behavior as, "that which is socially desirable and in which some way benefits another person, or society at large" (p.2). Harris (1999) argued that media has an enormous amount of potential for producing prosocial behavior. Still and all, Rushton cited over 30 studies that have illustrated a direct relationship between television programs and children's prosocial behavior. Rushton argued that prosocial behavior is shown frequently on television and it, "is what will be learned by viewers as appropriate, normative behavior" (p.255). Therefore, because television has such a huge potential on influencing children and children watch large amounts of television, research in this domain provides useful and vital information for fostering and educating young influential minds.

In his book, Harris (1999) mentioned that many studies concerning children and prosocial behavior looked at Sesame Street. Harris summarized a few studies indicating that the show increases cultural awareness. Further, Harris cited studies that have illustrated how

the show has positive short term effects on children. Obviously, prosocial acts are present on television and can have an effect on children.

Potter and Ware (1989) analyzed prosocial acts on television. They found that 20.2 prosocial acts occur per hour on various hours of television programming. Yet, the researchers noticed that situational comedy programs did not display very many prosocial actions compared to the other types of programs, such as drama, and action/adventure. Furthermore, the researchers noted that the prosocial acts were often shown as rewarding and internally motivated. Likewise, heroes are usually presented with more prosocial behaviors than villains.

Even though Potter and Ware found that comedy programs did not contain many prosocial acts, Brown (1992) attested that entertainment television promotes prosocial behavior. In his paper, he evinced that many entertainment programs have illustrated ways in which individuals can cope and facilitate positive interactions. Brown noted that many countries around the world are integrating prosocial messages into entertainment television programs in order to promote prosocial development.

Accordingly, Rosenkoetter (1999) believed that television comedies were potential influencing agents on children's prosocial behavior. Using comedies such as, *The Cosby Show* and *Full House*, he discovered that children were able to identify prosocial themes. He also noticed that the children, who understood the prosocial themes, performed prosocial behaviors in their interactions.

Valkenburg and Janssen (1999) executed a cross-cultural investigation of children. They noticed that American and Dutch children rated entertainment programs similarly. Further, they found that males affiliated more value with violence and females affiliated more value with virtue. The authors observed that American children sought more value to realism and interestingness than Dutch children.

Sprakin, Liebert, and Poulos (1975) were interested in the relationship between prosocial exposure and prosocial behavior among children. Using a prosocial and neutral clip of *Lassie*, the researchers placed the children in an experimental situation, in which assistance from the child was needed. Children, who viewed the prosocial scenes of *Lassie*, were more inclined to help for a longer period of time than the other children, who viewed other scenes.

Potts, Huston, and Wright (1986) argued that most of the research literature on children has focused on perceptions more than behavior. Thus, the researchers found little evidence concerning television's affect on children's behavior. Nevertheless, the researchers believed that children's programming can influence behavior under certain arousal conditions.

One arousal condition that Sanson and Di Muccio (1993) employed was using toys. The researchers had sixty preschool children watch either a neutral, aggressive, or no cartoon.

At the same time, the researchers had each child play with a toy. They noticed that aggression was increased when children watched an aggressive cartoon and played with an aggressive toy. Interestingly, the researchers noted that prosocial behavior occurred fewer times in the aggressive cartoon and aggressive toy condition and in the no cartoon and no toy condition.

Because most children are attracted to cartoons than other genres, Forge and Phemister (1987) explored prosocial and neutral cartoons and children's programming. They discovered that prosocial cartoons resulted in more prosocial behavior than neutral programs. Moreover, the increase in prosocial behavior did not differ if the program was animated or non-animated.

Looking at a different genre, Schuetz and Sprafkin (1979) looked at children's TV commercials. Researchers found that more aggressive, antisocial acts were displayed than prosocial acts. The researchers also discovered that male characters were more visibly present and more likely to engage in aggression or altruism than female characters. They concluded that, "children were more likely than adults to perform both aggressive and altruistic acts" (p. 39). Equally important, they remarked that, "children attend to child characters on television and learn more from similar than dissimilar models suggests that the conditions are optimal for child viewers to be affected by the presentation of these behaviors." (p.39).

Stout, Jr., and Mouritsen (1988) also analyzed prosocial behavior in advertising. However, they found very different results. The researchers did an extensive content analysis and noticed many prosocial models in children's advertising. The researchers noted that the prosocial models tended to be kind, unselfish, and affectionate. They reasoned that children's prosocial advertising serves as a socialization influence on children.

Rather than looking at advertising or television, Silvern and Williamson (1987) decided to look at video games and children's behavior. The researchers discovered that violent video games arouse children in the same fashion as violent cartoons on television. Also, researchers observed that children, who watched more television before playing video games, exhibited more prosocial actions than children, who played video games immediately before watching television.

Bankart and Anderson (1979) found research that antisocial actions on television lead to antisocial behavior among children. Hence, the researchers hypothesized that prosocial actions on television would lead to prosocial behaviors among children. They found that children with exposure to prosocial behavior resulted in short-term prosocial behavior. From this cause, the authors urged that future research look at long-term effects of prosocial viewing.

Some have argued that parents play a major role in what programs children watch (Abelman, 1985). Abelman categorized parents into two types: inductive and sensitizing. He described that inductive parents were more communication oriented, while sensitizing

parents were physical-authority oriented. Abelman found that inductive parents concerning television watching are more likely than sensitizing parents to watch more prosocial than antisocial programs. In addition, inductive parents were more likely than sensitizing parents to utilize prosocial conflict solutions and to affect their children's prosocial behavior.

Yet, some have argued that another child may influence children's behavior after watching television (Drabman and Thomas, 1977). Because most children watch television with other peers or siblings, Drabman and Thomas examined children's imitation of behaviors when viewing alone and in pairs. Using only little boys, the researchers observed that boys, who watched the aggressive film, were less likely to use constructive behavior than boys, who watch the prosocial film. Moreover, children's behavior was increased when the viewing of films occurred with another person.

Nonetheless, some have argued that prosocial behavior depend on the child's self-esteem (Baran, 1974). Baran found that children with low self-esteem showed more prosocial modeling behavior than children with high self-esteem. Baran asserted that males and females with similar self-esteem ratings exhibited similar amounts of modeling prosocial behavior. Based on his findings, Baran determined that low self-esteem individuals are more likely to imitate prosocial behaviors than aggressive behaviors that are shown on television.

Despite the enormous amounts of research studies dealing with children, television, and prosocial behavior, many future studies are needed. First of all, past research studies have mainly focused on short-term effects. More research is needed looking at long-term effects of prosocial behaviors. This would be more insightful and more advantageous. Secondly, most of the research has employed American children for their sample. Future research should examine whether cultural differences exists between children. It would be interesting to see if children in other countries have the same attraction toward cartoons that American children have. Third, future studies should look at more variable involved with watching prosocial media. For instance, in this review, two different studies included parenting style and co-viewing. Future studies should look at variables such as co-viewing with different genders and co-viewing with different age groups.

All in all, mass media is a powerful influence on children. For that reason, more research studies should be conducted concerning mass media, children, and prosocial behavior. After all, Rushton declared that, "television does have the power to affect the social behavior of viewers in positive, prosocial direction. This suggests that television is an effective agent of socialization, that television entertainment is modifying the viewer's perceptions of the world and how to live in it" (p.255). To conclude, Liebert and Schwartzberg (1977) remarked, "All television is educational, the only question is: what is it teaching?" (p. 170).

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Using Curriculum-Based Measurements to Assess Reading: The Cultural Connections of Diverse Students with Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

Students with learning disabilities face real reading challenges. Research into the reading performance of culturally diverse students indicates improved reading performance for culturally diverse students when text matches students' cultural perspective. This quasi-experimental research investigates whether Caucasian and African American students with learning disabilities read diverse text differently. Curriculum-based measures (fluency level, comprehension score, and meaning-changing deviations) were used to assess reading performance by ethnicity and reading ability. Two-way MANOVA tests yielded interactions for reading ability x passage and reading ability x ethnicity. Results indicate that low achieving readers comprehended more and had fewer meaning-changing deviations when cultural cues were embedded in text. Results of this study indicate that further consideration must be given to the cultural perspective of readers and text used in reading assessment. Generalizations about student reading ability must be contextualized in discussions about the presence or absence of cultural cues in text to be read.

Using Curriculum-Based Measurements to Assess Reading: The Cultural Connections of Diverse Students with Learning Disabilities

In the classroom context, many students with learning disabilities face reading challenges (Salend, 2008; Mercer & Mercer, 2005; Mercer & Pullen, 2005). They lose their place, they read slowly, and depend upon phonics strategies to read unknown words. Researchers report that students with disabilities are unable to make sense of literary text, unable to gain reading proficiency (Wong, 1986).

Anderson (1994) thinks that "minority children may sometimes be counted as failing to comprehend school reading material because their schemata does not match those of the majority culture. Basal reading programs, content area texts, and standardized tests lean heavily on the conventional assumption that meaning that is inherent in the words and structure of a text" (p. 480).

Anderson's comments on this topic are consistent with those of Rosenblatt (2004):

“The notion that the marks [on a page] in themselves possess meaning is hard to dispel. From the very beginning and often even before some expectation, some tentative feeling, idea, or purpose, no matter how vague at first, starts the reading process and develops into the constantly self-revising impulse that guides selection, synthesis, and organization. The linguistic-experimental reservoir reflects the reader’s cultural, social, and personal history” (p. 1370).

Prominent research in this field substantiates the notion that ethnic/cultural

background influences the way students engage in educational experiences and participate in learning (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008; Gay, 2000; Lee, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Delpit, 1990). These studies suggest that attention be given to differences in reading performance across student groups when the text to be read matches reader schemata.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two theoretical perspectives: social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 2004, 1994, 1969). The theory of social constructivism asserts the notion that learners view themselves in their surroundings through their own experience and the experience of those around them (Vygotsky, 1978). The roles that cultural and linguistic differences play figure prominently in considerations of student performance. Text that is read is interpreted through persona and cultural cues and experiences (Gee, 1992, Vygotsky, 1978, Langer, 1990, Knoeller, 1994, Lee, 1995, 2005, 2006, 2007, Lee & Majors, 2000). When no cultural cues are familiar, students have difficulty identifying with and understanding the literary text (Spinelli, 2008; Sabbatino, 2008; Galda & Beach, 2001; Beach, Appleman & Dorsey, 1995, & Ladson-Billings, 1997).

Transactional theory asserts that learners’ personal engagement with text facilitates sense making that is pertinent to their individual past and present (Rosenblatt, 2004; 1994, 1969). Rosenblatt (2004) asserts, “the notion that the marks [on a page] in themselves possesses meaning is hard to dispel” (p. 1370). Readers come to the task using their own experiences, knowledge, and perceptions. They use cultural, social, and historical reservoirs to understand what they read.

Related Literature

Curriculum-based assessment (CBA) refers to the measurement of student performance of school-related academic tasks using reliable assessment measures of basic skills in reading and mathematics (i.e., words per minute (wpm), fluency, comprehension, percent correct). CBA can document incremental progress for students with learning disabilities and can be used to compare individual students with others (Siberolitti & Hintze, 2007; Deno, Marston, Shinn & Tindal, 1983; Shinn & Marston, 1985; Parmar, Deluca & Janczak, 1994). Since its inception, measures like wpm and fluency have been considered a low-stakes mechanism for progress monitoring for students with disabilities.

Deno, Marston, Shinn & Tindal (1983) used curriculum-based measures (CBM) to differentiate between fifth grade low-achieving students and students with learning disabilities. Shinn & Marston (1985) wanted to know whether CBM could be used to differentiate between students with learning disabilities, low achieving, and regular education students. Parmar, Deluca, & Janczak (1994) assessed students' oral reading of science text, comparing the performance of sixth grade students in regular education and students with mild disabilities in grades 2-8. Silberolitt & Hintze (2007) used hierarchical linear modeling to establish and compare student rates of growth. In each of these studies, CBMs were found to be reliable instruments for assessing student ability and differences in academic performance. Today, these measures are valid and reliable ways to assess reading progress of students in general education settings.

Previous CBM studies involving students from diverse ethnic backgrounds sought to determine performance differences across ethnic groups. Recently, researchers reported the use of curriculum-based measures to investigate reading from an intercultural perspective. Kamintz-Berkooza & Shapiro (2005) used curriculum-based measures to assess the oral reading of Hebrew students. Ramirez & Shapiro (2007) investigated the oral reading fluency of Spanish speakers, when reading in their first language and in their second language. Hintz, Callahan, Matthews, Williams & Tobin (2002) examined the differential predictive bias of CBM in reading across African American and Caucasian students in grades two–five using hierarchical multiple regression on oral reading fluency and reading comprehension.

These studies move past comparison of performance by ethnic groups to examine the validity or predictive bias of CBM as a measure of reading performance for students from specific ethnic groups. This is an important distinction because special education research has given little attention to cultural perspective in validating the effectiveness of CBMs in assessing students' reading performance. Neither has attention been given to an examination of how socio cultural perspective informs the sense making of special learners during the reading experience.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how African American students with learning disabilities read literary text replete with cultural cues. Our goal is to determine whether access to familiar cultural cues in text improves reading performance as measured by curriculum-based measures. An investigation of a culturally sensitive approach to CBM for African American students with disabilities could impact literacy assessment practices for culturally diverse students receiving special education services.

Research Questions

- 1) Is there a significant difference in the oral reading performance of African American and Caucasian students with disabilities when they read culture-embedded text?

- 2) Is there a significant difference in the way African American and Caucasian students with disabilities read culture-embedded text?

Methodology

Context

Participants were seventh or eighth grade students who received special education services in one of seven public schools in a high poverty school district located in western New York. Students were recruited from special education classrooms. To be eligible to participate, students had to meet three criteria. First, they had to have a Learning Disability (as determined by state and federal guidelines). Second, they had to be identified as “black”/African American or “white”/Caucasian on school records. Third, they had to be enrolled in school as a student in grade seven or eight. Fifty-six students participated. Descriptive statistics indicate that 29 students were African American and 27 were Caucasian. Seventeen of the 56 read at or above the third grade reading level (Woodcock-Johnson scores). See Table 1 for participant demographics.

Table 1.
Demographics

| Variable | N | African American | Caucasian | Pearson χ^2 |
|------------------------|---|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Gender | | | | 1.7857 |
| Male | | 19 | 14 | $p=.1814$ |
| Female | | 10 | 13 | |
| Age | | | | 9.5714 |
| 14 yrs old | | 13 | 13 | $p=.0083$ |
| 15 yrs old | | 13 | 9 | |
| 16 yrs old | | 3 | 5 | |
| Woodcock-Johnson Score | | | | 2.3929 |
| Less than 3.0 | | 8 | 9 | $p=.3023$ |
| 3.0 – 3.9 | | 9 | 6 | |
| 4.0 and above | | 12 | 12 | |
| Grade | | | | 1.7857 |
| Seven | | 11 | 12 | $p=.1814$ |
| Eight | | 18 | 15 | |

Procedures

Passage Identification. The researcher identified four excerpts from trade books deemed culturally diverse. Six education experts were surveyed to determine their opinion about the cultural perspective of each excerpt. Based on their assertions, three passages were designated or identified. Experts agreed that an excerpt from *The Gold Cadillac*, by Mildred Taylor, reflected an African American perspective. Similarly, an excerpt from *Stone Fox*, by John Reynolds Gardiner, was thought to reflect a Caucasian perspective.

Experts collectively determined that an excerpt from *Bridge to Terabithia*, by Kathryn Paterson, reflected a Neutral perspective.

Data Collection Procedures. Data collection was scheduled and completed within two weeks. Students were grouped by ethnicity and reading ability. School records were used to determine ethnicity. Woodcock-Johnson scores were used to determine reading ability (low = \leq grade 3, middle= grade 3 – grade 4; high= $>$ grade 4).

Each of the three graduate students met participants individually in a designated area outside the classroom. Researchers collected demographic and oral reading data. The text presentation was counterbalanced with the neutral text first, followed by either the African American text or the Caucasian text.

Attention to procedural reliability was given when a reliability checker listened to five randomly selected sessions conducted by three graduate students. This individual used a checklist of integral components for each session to ensure that procedures used matched procedures prescribed for the study. Procedural reliability = .93%.

Measurements

Oral Reading Fluency. Oral reading fluency was rated using a fluency rating scale based on the work of Pinnell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough & Beatty (1995; p. 15). The fluency scale focuses on students' grouping of words or phrasing, adherence to the author's syntax or sentence structure, and expressiveness during oral reading. This dependent measure is included as a means for assessing the quality of students' oral reading. Level 1 represents word-by word reading. Level 2 represents two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings, which are awkward and unrelated to the larger passage context. Level 3 represents three- or four- word phrase groupings. Although phrasing seems appropriate, there is little or no evidence of expressive interpretation. Level 4 represents larger, meaningful phrase groups. Even with deviations, repetitions, the readers' syntax seems consistent with the authors; there is evidence of expressive interpretation.

To determine reading fluency for each passage, researchers listened to the recording twice before determining a fluency rating. Listening the first time acclimated data recorders to the vocal characteristics of the reader. Listening the second time allowed the data recorder to listen for reading fluency and record a fluency score. Inter-rater reliability for rating five participants was 76%. Follow-up discussion revealed a misunderstanding of scoring procedures, which accounted for the rate of agreement on this measure.

Oral Reading Rate. Oral reading rate refers to the number of words correctly read in one minute. Data collectors used the Pinnell et al. (1995) procedure for calculation of oral reading rate. Repetitions and self-corrections of words are counted as correct. Words omitted or substituted, and not correct were considered oral reading errors. These were subtracted from the overall total of words correctly read per minute. Inter-rater reliability

between two reliability raters was 82% (+/- two words). Differences in recording mechanisms and timepieces accounted for some variance in agreement.

Oral Reading Deviations. Each participant's oral reading deviations score was the sum of substitutions, repetitions, omissions, insertions, and self-corrections. Substitutions included the addition or deletion of prefixes or suffixes to text as well as groups of text words substituted with one or more words. Substitutions of partial words were counted as omissions. Omissions were counted when the reader omitted a whole word. Omission of a series of text words in a single instance was considered one omission. Insertions were counted when the reader inserted a whole word or a single string of words at one location. A single word repetition or a single string of words were counted as a repetition. Self-corrections were marked as delineated.

Meaning Changing Deviations. The meaning-changing deviations score refers to the numbers of meaning-changing deviations made during oral reading of each passage. Scorers located each deviation on the text transcript to determine whether the deviations resulted in a change in the meaning of the text. The criteria for determining meaning change included: 1) adherence to grammatical conventions of the sentence; 2) adherence to sentence meaning at the point where the deviation occurred; and 3) the relation of the deviation to the entire passage.

Two graduate students independently coded students' deviations (substitutions, repetitions, insertions, omissions, and self-corrections) and meaning changing deviations. Inter-rater reliability of meaning changing deviations was 93%. Differences in student diction and vocalization accounted for variation.

Comprehension Scores. Comprehension scores were gleaned using students' answers to short constructed questions, which followed their reading of African American text and the Caucasian text. Primary trait scoring (acceptable or unacceptable) was used to determine comprehension scores (Langer, Campbell, Neuman, Mullis, Persky & Donahue, 1995). Inter-rater reliability in comprehension scoring was 81%. Variance can be accounted for by scorers' second-guessing their decisions about each item. Raters indicate that judging each item on its own merit was more difficult to score.

Study Design

To determine whether there is a significant difference in the oral reading fluency of African American students with learning disabilities, a Pearson's chi-square was run for each of three independent variables. A 2 x 3 x 2 multivariate analysis of variance statistical test was run to determine whether there is a significant difference in the reading performance, using CBM, for African American students with disabilities when reading culturally cued text. Independent variables were ethnicity, reading ability, and passage. Dependent variables used in this study were oral reading fluency (ORF), oral reading deviations (ORD), meaning-changing deviations (MCD), and comprehension (C).

Results

Research Question 1: *Is there a significant difference in the oral reading fluency of African American and Caucasian students with disabilities when they read culturally cued text?*

Pearson’s chi-square test were run to assess oral reading fluency for ethnicity: Gold Cadillac $\chi^2 = .28969$, 3 df, $p = .96196$; for Stone Fox $\chi^2 = 4.317$, 3 df, $p = .22917$. There is no significant difference in the oral reading fluency of African American and Caucasian students with disabilities when they read culturally cued text.

Research Question 2: *Is there a significant difference in reading performance for African American students and Caucasian students when reading culturally cued text?*

A 2 x 3 x 2 multi-variate analysis of variance (MANOVA) yielded a significant multivariate for ethnicity x ability x passage: $F(6,96) = 2.48$, $p = .03$. Significant univariate main effects for comprehension were: $F(2,50) = 5.52$, $p = .01$ (Table 2).

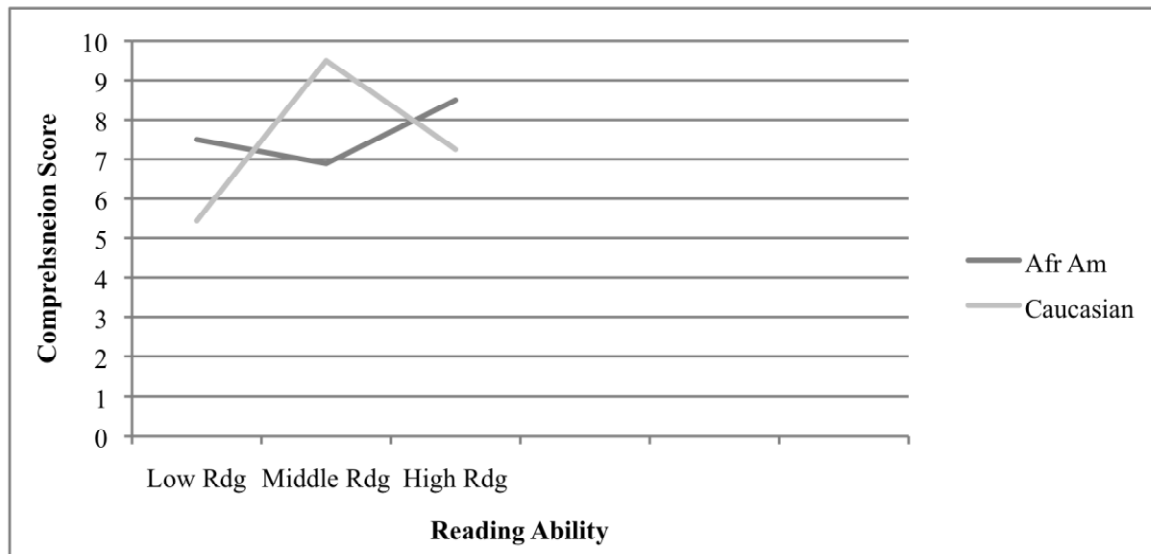
Table 2.
Skeletal Source Table
2/x/3x2 MANOVA

| 2 x 3 x Oral Reading Dependent Variables | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-----|---------------------|---------------|-----|-------|-----|--------|-----|
| Multivariate Analyses | | | | Univariate Analyses | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Comprehension | | WPM | | MC Dev | |
| Variable | df | F | P | df | F | P | F | p | F | P |
| Ethnicity | 3,48 | .56 | .65 | 1,50 | .07 | .79 | .06 | .81 | 1.36 | .25 |
| Rdg Ability | 6,95 | 6.28 | .00 | 2,50 | 3.36 | .05 | 12.09 | .00 | 15.39 | .00 |
| Passage | 3,48 | 20.45 | .00 | 1,50 | 54.61 | .00 | 9.84 | .00 | 3.74 | .06 |
| Eth x Rdg Ability | 6,96 | 2.29 | .04 | 2,50 | 2.52 | .09 | .39 | .68 | 3.31 | .05 |
| Eth x Passage | 3,48 | .83 | .49 | 1,50 | .15 | .70 | .58 | .45 | 1.26 | .27 |
| Rdg Ability x Passage | 6,96 | 2.33 | .04 | 2,50 | .90 | .41 | 6.09 | .00 | .52 | .60 |
| Eth x Rdg Ability x Passage | 6, 96 | 2.48 | .03 | 2,50 | 5.52 | .01 | 2.29 | .11 | .30 | .74 |

African American Low Ability readers’ mean scores reflect two more accurately answered questions (7.5) more than Caucasian Low Ability readers (5.44) on the comprehension measure for *Gold Cadillac* than Caucasian Low Ability readers (Figure1). The trend line is curvilinear for African American readers and Caucasian readers. African American Middle readers’ mean scores reflect three fewer accurately

answered questions (6.89) than Caucasian Middle readers (9.5). African American High readers' mean scores reflect one more accurately answered question (8.5) than Caucasian High readers (7.25).

Figure 1. Ethnicity x Reading Ability x Passage
Gold Cadillac (Comprehension)



The statistical test yielded a significant multivariate for ethnicity x reading ability interaction: $F(6,96)=2.29, p=.42$. Significant univariate main effects for meaning-changing deviations $F(2,50)=3.3312, p=.045$. African American Low Ability readers' mean M-C Deviation score reflects eight fewer meaning-changing deviations (15) than Caucasian Low Ability readers (23.67) when reading the *Gold Cadillac* text (Figure 2). The trend line for African American readers is consistent with expectations—the mean score for Low Ability readers reflects more meaning-changing deviations than Middle Ability (11.11) and High Ability readers (5.83). That is not the case for Caucasian readers. The trend line reflects the dramatic difference in meaning-changing deviations for Caucasian readers. Middle Ability readers' mean M-C Deviation score was 6.83 and 4.33 for High Ability readers.

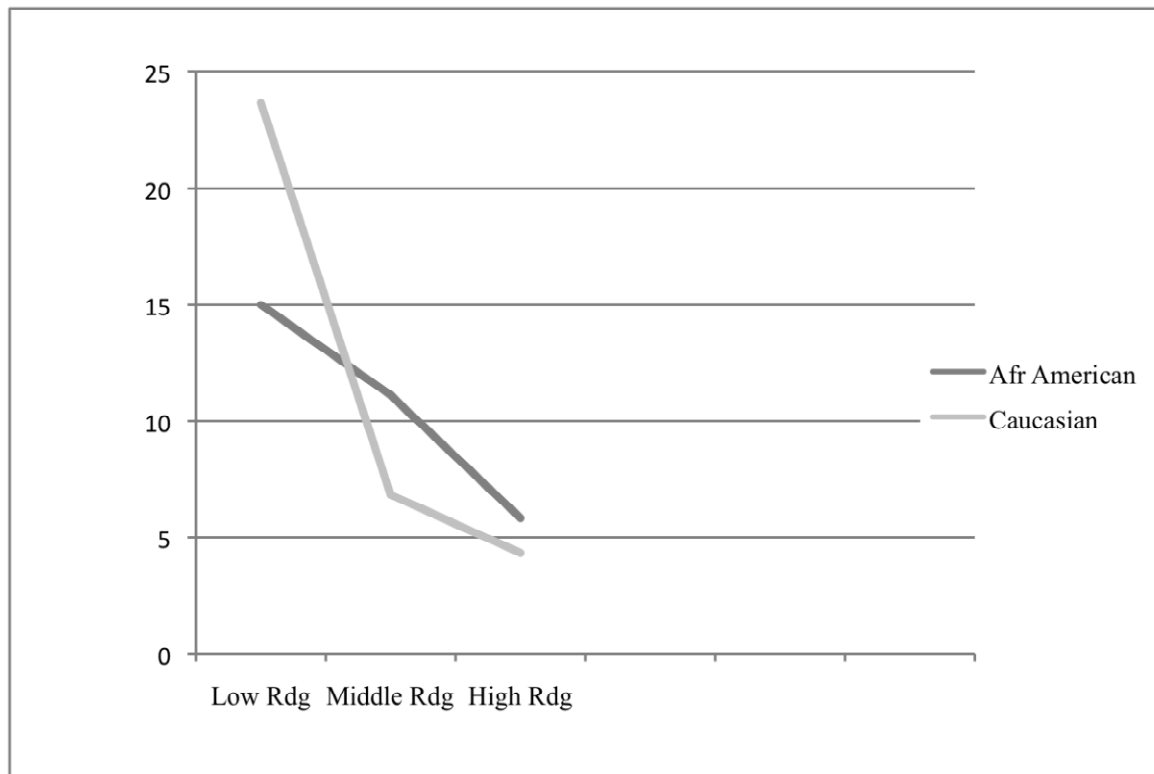
Summary

There were no significant main effects for ethnicity in Oral Reading Fluency. There were two-way interactions for reading ability x passage and reading ability x ethnicity. Reading ability, to some extent, is dependent upon cultural cues embedded in text.

Discussion

The results of this study substantiate the importance of using multiple measures to assess the reading process. Over-reliance upon one measure could thwart performance results for African American students with learning disabilities. This may be the case for students from other cultural backgrounds. Oral reading rate, accuracy, and

Figure 2. Ethnicity x Reading Ability: *Gold Cadillac*
(MC Deviations)



comprehension are well established as reliable curriculum-based measurements. Much research has been done to substantiate each as standalone measures of student performance. However, any one of these alone, may not be effective. They must be employed collectively to provide insight into reading.

Findings also suggest that African American students with learning disabilities who struggle with reading may use cultural connections with text to make sense of what they read. Findings presented here are consistent with findings by Lee & Majors (2000) and Lee (1995), which suggest that struggling readers draw upon cultural perspective to navigate learning experiences. When they personally engage, they draw upon historical and present experiences. The schema informs the reader, thereby connecting him/her to a frame of reference useful during the oral reading process. While all students may draw

upon prior experiences when reading culturally cued text, access to such text is less important for middle and high ability readers with learning disabilities. Rather, access to culturally-cued text provides much needed support.

The findings of this study are consistent with Rosenblatt's transactional theory and Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural learning. Struggling readers draw upon cues and nuances familiar to them to interpret what they read. Rosenblatt calls this a transaction with the text. According to Vygotsky, the way one interprets any given situation rests within previous sociocultural experiences. Past experience informs one about what is present. When it comes to reading text, what the symbols mean to the reader is inherent within the readers. The meaning of the text is embedded in the experience of the reader, not the text itself.

Socio-cultural perspective is an important consideration when assessing student performance and proficiency. Study results indicate that low achieving African American students with learning disabilities perform differently when familiar cultural cues are embedded in text. This study suggests the importance of incorporating reading materials, which scaffold the cultural perspective of struggling readers. A move toward the use of culturally sensitive materials for African American students with disabilities could impact literacy assessment practices.

This study suggests further study in three areas. First, researchers could investigate whether students with learning disabilities have access to culturally cued text during learning, instruction, and assessment. Secondly, researchers could examine classroom resources to investigate the amount of culturally cued text available to students. Finally, researchers could also examine the impact of reading multicultural text on oral reading behaviors for African American students.

Conclusion

Curriculum based-measurements are reliable measures of reading performance. However, they may not be reliable performance indicators for African Americans students who read unfamiliar text. For this reason, the investigation of cultural perspective cannot be underestimated when assessing the way students read text. Students with disabilities need access to a variety of texts from diverse cultural perspectives. Generalizations about student reading ability must be contextualized in discussions about the presence or absence of cultural cues in text to be read.

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Illustrating and Designing Quranic Imagery

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Abstract

Selected verses from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English language translation of the meaning of the Quran have been used as a literary text to teach both descriptive and figurative imagery (including similes, metaphors and symbols) to students at the undergraduate level in an Islamic institution. The technique-Illustrating and Designing for teaching imagery has been selected to accommodate the text. The group of students was taught imagery using one technique covering 2 class sessions. Assignments were given to derive data for the evaluation of the level of understanding of the lessons on imagery. An analysis of the data from the assignments shows a high level of understanding of the lessons on imagery by the students.

Illustrating and Designing Quranic Imagery

The Quran contains an abundance of imagery, Many Quranic images are conveyed literally. These constitute descriptive imagery whereby they clarify or give a vivid picture of something. Then, there is figurative imagery, which are conveyed by figurative language, such as in metaphors, similes, symbols, etc. The figurative language used in the Quran, its metaphors, similes, symbols, etc., can certainly be looked at in more detail. Translators of the English language translations of the Quran, in striving to put across the closest meaning they can of the original Quran, do not neglect to use figurative language effectively.

Muhammad Asad explains the need for the use of imagery in the Quran.

This being so, it is not enough for man to be told, "If you behave righteously in this world, you will attain to happiness in the happiness in the life to come", or alternatively, "If you do wrong in this world, you will suffer for it in the hereafter". Such statements would be far too general and abstract to appeal to man's imagination and, thus, to influence his behaviour. What is needed is a more direct appeal to the intellect, resulting in a kind of "visualization" of the consequences of one's conscious acts and omissions and such an appeal can be effectively produced by means of metaphors, allegories and parables, each of them stressing, on the one hand, the absolute dissimilarity of all that man will experience after resurrection from whatever he did or could experience in this world; and, on the other hand, establishing means of comparison between these two categories of experience (Asad, 1980:990).

A judgment sample of verses was taken from a few different surah. Two index categorization books were used for this selection: Tafsil Ayat AlQuran AlHakim by Jol Labom (Labom,1963) and AlMustadrak by Edward Montet (Montet,1963). Both these books were translated by Mohamed Fouad Abdul Baqui and have a systematic listing of Quranic verses according to topics (eg. Heaven, Hell, Justice, etc.). Under Heaven, there are altogether 258 verses mentioned in 58 *surah* (chapters of the Quran). Under Hell, there are altogether 144 verses mentioned in 35 *surah*. The verses to be dealt with in this paper are:

XXXVII Surah As-Saffat (Those Ranged in Ranks), verses 62-68, 74 from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English language translation of the meaning of the Quran. This paper first provides a brief explanation and discussion of each verse to familiarize the reader with the basic meaning of the verse. The technique and the exemplary Quranic images (text) will then be presented in this paper:

Technique: Illustrating and Designing

Source: Pictures for Language Learning by Andrew Wright (Wright,1989)

Text: Verses 62-68, 74 of Surah As-Saffat

Source: The Holy Quran by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Abdullah,1983)

The Discussion of Selected Quranic Images

Verses 62-62 of Surah As-Saffat tell us what awaits the wrongdoers:

- 62. Is that the better entertainment
Or the Tree of Zaqqum?**
- 63. For We have truly
Made it (as) a trial
For the wrong-doers**
- 64. For it is a tree
That springs out
Of the bottom of Hell-fire:**
- 65. The shoots of its fruit-stalks
Are like the heads of devils:**
- 66. Truly they will eat thereof
And fill their bellies therewith**
- 67. Then on top of that
They will be given
A mixture made of
Boiling water**
- 68. Then shall their return
Be to the (Blazing) Fire.**

Abdullah Yusuf Ali explains about the Tree of Zaqqum which exists only in Hell: "this bitter tree of Hell is a symbol of contrast with the beautiful Garden of Heaven with its delicious fruits" (1199).

A truly horrid picture of Hell is given by the chain of torture that revolves around the Tree of Zaqqum.

Verse 64 tells the readers that it is a tree that grows at the bottom of Hell. “Springs out” gives one the feeling that it is a thing unwanted and unpleasant, in a milder sense, like weeds in a garden. In contrast, one can picture the difference between the lively greenery in the garden and the bitter tree in Hell.

Verses 65-66 further describe this evil tree. The ugly fruits of this tree in Hell are described through a simile, “like the heads of devils”. This image strongly contrasts the lovely fruits in Heaven, or even the fruits that one is familiar with on earth. What horrid-looking fruits are in Hell and how bitter they must taste, too.

Verses 67-68 tell that after the sinners eat these bitter fruits of Zaqqum, they will be given a mixture of boiling water to drink as a further punishment. The readers can feel this humiliating and painful ordeal after which they return to the fire again. This makes one feel the chain of calamities of steps of horrors that the sinners have to go through. It seems unending.

The senses affected are visual, tactile and gustatory.

The 2 lines in Verse 74 of Surah As-Saffat tell us that all shall suffer.....

**74. Except the sincere (and devoted)
Servants of God.**

There are only two lines that tell us what the believers will not go through. These two lines manage succinctly to give one a sense of relief and satisfaction that doing good on earth will indeed pay off in the end. As Abdullah Yusuf Ali puts it, “unrighteousness and wrong-doing never prosper in the long run” (1200).

The Introductory Lesson on Imagery

There is a need for an introductory lesson on imagery since there are certain aspects of imagery that the students need to know and understand before they can fully participate in class discussions or attempt any of the written assignments. A teacher can devise his/her own introductory lesson on imagery according to the level of language competence of his/her group of students.

Thus, for this case study, it must be kept in mind that the group of participants is of the preintermediate English proficiency level. Careful selection of a suitable technique and level of difficulty of the text must be done. Consequently, activities that help to enhance the four language skills are also thought of.

A suggested written assignment after an introductory lesson on imagery is: Make sentences using the three literary devices and explain how and why the simile, metaphor and symbol are used. State the senses that are affected by each image.

The written assignment will be used as basis for gauging whether or not the students have understood the lesson.

Lesson Plan on Imagery

Technique: Illustrating and Designing

Text: Verses 62-68,74 of Surah As-Saffat

Level: PreIntermediate (undergraduate)

Duration: One Hour

Objectives: Develop in students the ability to:

- 1) Identify and/or locate the images in the verses.
- 2) Recognize and distinguish between the 2 types of imagery :
 - i) Descriptive imagery
 - ii) Figurative imagery and the literary devices used
- 3) State which senses are affected .
- 4) Draw/sketch the images.
- 5) Use the four skills:
 - i) Speaking : Not done.
 - ii) Listening : Done in listening to the verses read by the teacher.
 - iii) Writing : Not done.
 - iv) Reading : Not done.

The teacher can start the lesson by recapitulating the (previous) introductory lesson on imagery. Allow 15 minutes for this.

In the technique, Illustrating and Designing, the students are allowed to express themselves imaginatively not in verbal or written work or by reading but by listening and then drawing, sketching and colouring their interpretation of what is read to them. The students are told beforehand to bring coloured pencils.

The level of suitability for this technique would be elementary level English language class students (undergraduate) at an Islamic institutions.

The original text used for this technique was replaced with Quranic images of Heaven and Hell selected from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English language translation of the meaning of the Quran: Verses 62-68, 74 of Surah As-Saffat. The teacher begins by distributing the copies of the verses. The teacher then informs the students that these verses that they are about to study are from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English language translation of the meaning of the Quran, specifically, Verses 62-68 of Surah As-Saffat. The teacher tells the students that these verses are about Hell. The teacher reads these verses:

- 62. Is that the better entertainment
Or the Tree of Zaqqum?**
- 63. For We have truly
Made it (as) a trial
For the wrong-doers**
- 64. For it is a tree
That springs out
Of the bottom of Hell-fire:**
- 65. The shoots of its fruit-stalks**

- Are like the heads of devils:**
66. **Truly they will eat thereof
And fill their bellies therewith**
67. **Then on top of that
They will be given
A mixture made of
Boiling water**
68. **Then shall their return
Be to the (Blazing) Fire.**

The teacher will now ask the students to focus on the several images that are projected in these verses.

Verse 64 line 1-3: **For it is a tree
That springs out
Of the bottom of Hell-fire**

What type of imagery? Descriptive imagery.

This image gives a vivid description of the location of the tree of Zaqqum and compares its growth process to that of weeds.

Senses: visual.

One can also imagine seeing this horrid tree in Hell.

Verse 65, lines 1-3: **The shoots of its fruit-stalks
Are like the heads
Of devils**

What type of imagery? Figurative Imagery using the literary device: simile.

The word "like" tells one that a simile is being used to compare the shoots to devils' heads.

Senses: visual.

This image gives a vivid picture in our minds of how evil-looking fruits of this tree in Hell are.

Verse 66, lines 1-2: **Truly they will eat thereof
And fill their bellies therewith**

What type of Imagery? Descriptive imagery.

This image tells one that the sinners will eat these disgusting fruits until they are full.

Senses : visual, gustatory.

One can picture the sinners eating these fruits and imagine how foul these fruits must taste, too.

Verse 67, lines 1-4: **Then on top of that
They will be given
A mixture made of
Boiling water**

What type of imagery? Descriptive imagery.

This image tells one that after eating these dreadful fruits, the sinners will drink a mixture of boiling water.

Senses: visual, gustatory, tactile.

One can picture this painful ordeal, having to taste, drink and feel the heat of the mixture of boiling water.

Verse 68, lines 1-2: **Then shall their return
Be to the (Blazing) Fire**

What type of Imagery? Descriptive imagery.

One is told that after eating these atrocious fruits and drinking the mixture of boiling water, the sinners will return to the "(Blazing Fire)" again to be tortured.

Senses: visual, tactile.

One can picture and imagine feeling the heat of the Fire.

After the explanation, the teacher reads the verses again, this time informing the students that they are to sketch, draw and colour while the teacher reads these verses on Hell. The students are to draw the images that come into their minds as they listen. While the students listen, they sketch. The teacher can walk around the class and repeat the verses until the students are about done. Allow 15-20 minutes for this.

Then the teacher reads these 2 lines on Heaven. The teacher informs the students that these 2 lines are from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English language translation of the meaning of the Quran, specifically, Verse 74 of Surah As-Saffat. The teacher starts to read :

**74. Except the sincere (and devoted)
Servants of God**

These 2 lines tell that only the sincere and devoted servants of Allah do not have to go through what the sinners have to go through in Hell (as described in the verses just above).

Now the teacher can ask the students to draw and sketch a picture of Heaven, of what they feel to be the opposite of their previous drawing or sketch of Hell. The students can refer to their previous drawing. Allow 15-20 minutes for this.

If the students are able to complete the assignment within the remainder of the class time, these assignments can be collected at the end of the period. If not, these assignments will be collected at the beginning of the next lesson. These assignments will be the basis for gauging whether or not the students have understood the lesson.

A Case Study

Two lessons were taught to a group of students at the undergraduate level in an Islamic institution. This class is an English language –PreIntermediate level class. The students were taught for one hour of the introductory lesson on imagery and one hour of the above lesson plan using the technique-Illustrating and Designing with Quranic images. Observatory comments were taken and reproduced in this paper. The breakdown of the marking scheme for the two written assignments after each lesson was taught, is dealt with.

Evaluation of Assignments

The Introductory Lesson on Imagery

Assignment: Write a simile, metaphor and symbol, stating the senses that are affected.

For simile: Total - 5 marks.

4 marks for correct answers

(-) 1 mark for spelling error, (+) 1 mark for creativity, (-) 1 mark for grammatical error

For metaphor: Total - 5 marks

4 marks for correct answers

(-) 1 mark for spelling error, (+) 1 mark for creativity, (-) 1 mark for grammatical error

For symbol: Total - 5 marks

2 marks for each part of the symbol

(-) 1 mark for spelling error, (+) 1 mark for creativity, (-) 1 mark for grammatical error

Maximum Possible Score: 15 marks

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| No. of Participants | 2 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 2 |
| Scores | 14 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 9 |

Comments

Generally, this class of participating students lost points due to the fact that they had problems with grammar and word order. The students could not write their own symbols. Some wrote another metaphor for a symbol. It is also clear to see that the students have found similes and metaphors easier and symbols the most difficult.

The Lesson on Imagery using Quranic images and the technique-Illustrating and Designing.

Assignment: Draw, sketch and colour the images of Heaven and Hell.

Total marks - 30 marks (15 marks each)

For Heaven 4 marks for each image.

If the drawing contains more than 3 images: +3

For Hell 4 marks for each image.

If the drawing contains more than 3 images: +3

Maximum Possible Score: 15 marks

| | For Heaven | | | For Hell | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----|----|-----------------|----|----|
| No. of Participants | 8 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 7 |
| Scores | 15 | 12 | 10 | 15 | 12 | 10 |

Comments

For both Heaven and Hell, the majority of the participating students scored 12 marks when they drew three good representations of images. Those who scored full marks drew more than three representations of images and those who scored less did not draw clear representations of images. This technique was thought to be suitable for a preintermediate level class because they did not have to express themselves by words and sentences. They were asked to draw instead. The students, however, asked me many times whether they could write some explanatory notes beside their drawing for fear that I may not be able to interpret what they had drawn. I did not allow them to do this since I thought that this would defeat the purpose of this technique-- to express themselves in the form of drawing images. I assured them that I would be able to interpret and understand what they had drawn.

Conclusion

The focus of this technique (Illustrating and Designing) is of course, the teaching of imagery. At the same time, however, the teacher can point out new vocabulary and correct grammatical mistakes. For this preintermediate group of participants, the classroom activity was task-based, drawing and colouring.

This technique, Illustrating and Designing, text of Quranic imagery and the suitable activities carried out in the classroom, each plays its own role in a teacher's successful teaching session. They are an integrative part of the whole teaching session.

Basically, the following are the main objectives of any teacher teaching a lesson on imagery:

Objectives: Develop in students the ability to:

- 1) Distinguish the 2 types of imagery :
 - i) Descriptive imagery
 - ii) Figurative imagery
- 2) Distinguish the 3 literary devices usually used in figurative imagery:
 - i) Simile
 - ii) Metaphor
 - iii) Symbol
- 3) Recognize and use the literary terms for the five senses that can be affected through imagery :
 - i) see--visual
 - ii) hear—auditory
 - iii) touch—tactile
 - iv) smell--olfactory
 - v) taste--gustatory
- 4) Write their own similes, metaphors and symbols, stating the senses that are affected.

5) Use the four skills:

i) Listening

ii) Speaking

iii) Reading

iv) Writing

With the use of Quranic images, it is possible to generate a discussion on an aspect of Islam. This is an added advantage, especially at Islamic institutions. Both descriptive and figurative imagery, in particular, metaphors, similes, symbols, can be taught through Quranic images.

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Students with Juvenile Arthritis Participating in Recess

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Abstract

The participation of a student with juvenile arthritis in recess can often be both challenging and rewarding for the student and general education teacher. This paper will address common characteristics of students with juvenile arthritis and present basic solutions to improve the education of these students in the recess setting. Initially the definition and prevalence of juvenile arthritis will be presented. This will be followed by a discussion of juvenile arthritis for an individual in the classroom, and possible challenges and solutions for children with juvenile arthritis in the recess setting. Lastly, specific methods of including a student with juvenile arthritis in a basketball-related recess activity will be discussed.

Definition and Prevalence of Juvenile Arthritis

Juvenile arthritis is a general term for all types of arthritis and related conditions occurring in children (Horvart, Eichstaedt, & Kalakian, 2003). The primary pathology of the disorder is inflammation of the connective tissues (Scull & Athreya, 1995). Subtypes are characterized by the number of joints involved within the first six months of the onset of the disease. Approximately 300,000 children have some form of the disease (Arthritis Foundation, 2003). Juvenile arthritis is characterized by changes in the joints such as inflammation, contractures, and joint damage (Horvart, Eichstaedt, & Kalakian, 2003).

Juvenile Arthritis for an Individual in the Classroom

When discussing the general characteristics and educational implications of individuals with juvenile arthritis, one should note the fact that children with juvenile arthritis may exhibit characteristics which affect problems with mobility, strength, and endurance. In addition to these physical characteristics which can cause an ongoing distraction in the classroom, these children may experience psychological and social impact as a result of constant joint pain and stiffness. Also, children with juvenile arthritis may experience additional symptoms that could cause distraction in the classroom as result of the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) they often take. These symptoms may include stomach pain, nausea and vomiting, and headaches (Horvart, Eichstaedt, & Kalakian, 2003).

Possible Challenges for Children with Juvenile Arthritis in the Recess Setting

As a result of many characteristics associated with juvenile arthritis, including those associated with medicines used to treat symptoms of the disorder, special considerations must be made to properly instruct a student with juvenile arthritis in the recess setting. Before a discussion of possible challenges present when working with individuals with juvenile arthritis in this setting, it should be noted that exercise common to recess has been shown to have many benefits such as the following:

- Maintains joint flexibility
- Maintains muscle strength
- Helps regain lost motion or strength in a joint or muscle
- Helps reduce pain
- Makes functional activities, such as walking or dressing, easier
- Improves general fitness and endurance
- Maintains bone density (Kids Exercise, 2009).

It also should be stressed that teachers should provide a variety of activities during recess, some more structured than others, to accomplish the many goals of recess including the improvement of social skills and movement-related skills.

It goes without saying that the environment of recess is different than that of a classroom, and although all challenges to working with a student with juvenile arthritis may be present, a variety of special challenges may be of more concern in recess. As a result of the previously-noted special challenges associated with juvenile arthritis such as mobility, strength, endurance, pain, psychological and social impact, safety concerns may be especially important to note.

Possible Solutions to Challenges for Children with Juvenile Arthritis in the Recess Setting

The following chart notes possible characteristics associated with children with juvenile arthritis and possible solutions to these challenges in recess. It is important to remember that not all of these characteristics are prevalent in all individuals with juvenile arthritis and not all of these solutions will be successful when working with all children with juvenile arthritis. They do, however, represent a solid foundation. It is also important to remember that avoiding movement will usually weaken muscles and increase pain. Also, even during flare-ups, moderate activity common to recess is necessary and although the benefits of this exercise may not be immediately obvious, in time, well chosen exercises will pay off (Kids Exercise, 2009).

One important factor to remember for students with juvenile arthritis or any such medical condition in recess is to develop an environment that is cooperative. Such a cooperative environment would seem to lead to a high comfort level which would in term seem to be beneficial to many children with juvenile arthritis. This is the case as an uncomfortable environment is often characterized by negative psychological and social feelings which can often lead to feelings of a poor self-concept, depression and isolation, withdrawal and

paranoia. Table 1 lists some possible characteristics of the student with diabetes and possible solutions that can be used in recess to lead to a comfortable and beneficial environment. Following this chart a specific case incorporating modification procedures for including a student with juvenile arthritis in a recess activity related to basketball will be discussed.

Table 1

Concepts to Remember About Characteristics of Juvenile Arthritis in Recess

| Juvenile Arthritis Characteristics | Important Items to Remember in Regards to Characteristics |
|---|---|
| Mobility Problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint tightness can be reduced by exercise such as during recess. Without movement, joint deformities may occur, making it impossible to straighten the joint ▪ Modify and provide movement activities to avoid direct competition ▪ Modify movement activities in which students need to quickly change directions |
| Strength Problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modify strength activities in which the student is forced to be in direct competition ▪ Modify activities in which the student is forced to use strength |
| Endurance Problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modify activities involving endurance to avoid sudden movement ▪ Schedule time for rest during recess – allow student to do this in private if desired |
| Pain Problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exercise can reduce joint pain. ▪ Limit the repetitions of more demanding activities - especially when the student has not been feeling well |
| Psychological and Social Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modify activities in which “winners” and “losers” are often displayed ▪ Schedule time for rest during recess – allow student to do this in private if desired |
| Safety concerns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint tightness can be reduced by exercise. Without movement, joint deformities may occur, making it impossible to straighten the joint and possibly leading to injury ▪ Limit the repetitions for some activities as tired students are more susceptible to injury |
| Side effects from nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. stomach pain, nausea and vomiting, and headache) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine the immediate health of the student in order to avoid worsening the possible side effects of the medicine including stomach pain, nausea and vomiting, and headache |

***Methods of Including a Student with Juvenile Arthritis
in a Basketball-Related Recess Activity***

For the purpose of discussion of including a student with juvenile arthritis in recess, students will be participating in a simple activity in which students are divided into groups of approximately five, each group at its own basket. The groups will be shooting,

one student at a time, from marked spots on the floor. The other four group members obtain the rebound, pass to each other, and back to the shooter. Each shooter will shoot for one minute before rotating to another shooter. The skills that will be practiced are shooting, rebounding, and passing.

To appropriately include an individual with juvenile arthritis the following modifications should be made. Before the beginning of the activity, the student will be assessed in order of determining the current joint condition. In addition, the student should be assessed in terms of possible side effects of medicine including stomach pain, nausea and vomiting, and headache. If the student is feeling slight joint tightness it should be remembered that exercise can improve the condition. If the student is in condition to participate the student should be allowed to rest when needed. Because of the difficulty involved in quickly changing directions during the one minute time period, the student should be allowed to take a set number of shots such as twenty without a time limit. This should also help with possible problems with endurance. It would also be beneficial to not focus on comparing the number of shots that each student makes. Instead, students should look to compare and improve upon their own trials.

Conclusion

The participation of a student with juvenile arthritis in recess can often be challenging and rewarding for both the student and teacher. These social and movement-related rewards can manifest themselves in the ability of the teacher to guarantee the safety of all students in an instructionally sound environment. This paper has hopefully addressed some basic concerns and solutions to improve the recess setting of students with juvenile arthritis.

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Behavioral Strategies for Students with Autism in the General Education Classroom

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Abstract

The following article examines how behavioral interventions used in the general education classroom effect students with autism. The number of students with autism has increased significantly in the past 10 years. Teachers are now faced with providing instruction in inclusive settings within the general education classroom environment. Teachers need to have relevant and important strategies to decrease inappropriate, as well as, increase appropriate behaviors for students with autism to be successful in the general education classroom. The following project was conducted in the spring of 2009 at Springville Elementary School in Springville, Alabama. It focused on three classrooms which included a total of four students with a diagnosis of autism. The objective of the project was to focus on behavioral interventions that can be used in the general education environment to decrease inappropriate behaviors, increase appropriate behaviors and increase students' time in the classroom with their typical peers.

Behavioral Strategies for Students with Autism in the General Education Classroom

According to the Centers of Disease Control (2007), the prevalence of autism has increased to 1 in 150 in the past year. Each year more students with autism enter public school systems and generally have least restrictive environments (LRE) written into their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for placement in the general education classroom. Unfortunately, most general education teachers have little to no training in working with students with autism.

The trend of inclusion of students with disabilities including autism has been mostly lead by theoretical arguments related to social development and legal issues. Researchers have documented that students with disabilities that are included in the general education classroom display larger friendship bases, give and receive higher levels of social support, exhibit higher levels of social interaction, and have more advanced IEP goals than students in segregated placements (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001).

Common Behaviors in Children with Autism

Students with autism exhibit various types of behavior in and out of the classroom. Many of which could be a major distraction within the general education classroom

environment. Some common behaviors are clapping, hand flapping, self injurious behaviors, and yelling. Others might include rocking, mouthing objects, intense staring, and fixation on certain objects and/or subjects. Not all students exhibit the same behaviors. Each student's needs will be different as far as his or her behavior is concerned (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001).

Why Behaviors Occur

There are many reasons unwanted and/or inappropriate behaviors occur. Generally, no two students' patterns of behavior are the same. The student may be bored, frustrated, or have a lack of motivation for learning. The student just may not understand that certain behaviors are not permissible. The student may be having problems at home and is lashing out for attention at school. There is a possibility that the list of reasons could be endless, however it is important to analyze the behaviors that are consistently exhibited by the student so that appropriate interventions can be implemented (Cohen & Spenciner, 2005).

Most students with autism have difficulty with social interactions and are believed to be uninterested in interacting with others. Many students with autism have mild to severe sensory issues which make their participation in busy, sometimes loud, classrooms with many students hard to deal with. They may be overly stimulated to the point that they exhibit self-stimulatory behaviors to calm themselves which may possibly be a distraction to their classmates and teacher(s) (Schaaf & Miller, 2005).

Analyzing Behaviors

The most common way to analyze behaviors is to complete a Functional Behavior Assessment. Functional Behavior Assessments are used by educators to examine student behavior and to assist in identifying its function. The information gathered is then used to plan intervention and positive behavioral supports that are written into students' behavioral intervention plans. To identify the problem behavior, the behavior must be concrete and observable. Standardized assessments, record reviews, structured interviews, and observations are all used to successfully complete Functional Behavior Assessments (Cohen & Spenciner, 2005).

Ways to Reduce Undesired Behaviors

There is no single, effective intervention to reduce or eliminate undesirable behaviors in children with autism. However, there are many proactive strategies that can be used; it just depends on the child. Each situation must be looked at individually and all persons involved must work together and be as consistent as possible to benefit the child to the maximum extent possible.

Antecedent Procedures

Antecedent procedures are a proactive approach to prevent and reduce challenging behaviors by addressing the behavior before its occurrence. The most common

antecedent procedures are priming, prompt delivery, and picture schedules. Priming allows the child with autism to have an introduction to the lesson before the larger classroom lesson. It focuses on increasing social interactions throughout the school day. Prompt delivery pairs teacher with a typically developing student and a student with autism. The teacher prompts and models for the typically developing student and then has that student to prompt the student with autism (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001).

Delayed Contingencies

Oftentimes students with autism depend on positive reinforcement throughout the activity they are working on or the school day in general. In most situations, an adult cannot be with them one hundred percent of the time. On the other hand, a long term goal of independence is also an unspoken expectation for all students so educators and administrators must look at removing contingencies to foster independence. The removal of contingencies must take place gradually by thinning reinforcement schedules and delaying delivery of corrective feedback (Griffin, Griffin, Fitch, Albera, & Gringas, 2006).

Self-Management Strategies

Students must learn self-management skills. The push toward students being actively engaged in their educational programs is a very popular concept in public schools today. Students need to be able to use self-control to monitor their own behaviors as well as evaluate their school work. Ways to evaluate include: Self-correction, self-recording, self-monitoring, self-reporting, and self-graphing. Students can monitor their own work, record their own behavior, report findings to teacher, and graph their own evaluations of behaviors. Students may use their finding to reinforce themselves with schedules and rewards (Rivera & Smith, 1997). Prompts that encourage the use of self-management skills in the classroom include verbal cues, hand motions, physical prompts, timers, and a watch with an alarm (Wilkinson, 2008).

Social Stories

Social stories are short stories that describe relevant aspects of specific social situations. The aim of social stories is to teach social-perspective-taking to help interpret social cues and allows students to “read” social situations. They can be pictures and/or words, long or short, typed or handwritten. Social stories should be individualized to each situation and consist of descriptive, directive, perspective, and affirmative sentences (Delano & Snell, 2006). Areas where social stories may be extremely beneficial to the general education classroom teacher may include fire drill, tornado drill, assembly, change in scheduling, and preparation for a substitute (Gray, 2000).

Picture Schedules

Picture schedules use pictures of activities and/or objects for increasing predictability and as an alternative to verbal and written instruction. It allows the teacher to set up the

child's day and for them to manipulate what they must do, have done, and must finish within a certain time frame. Pictures may be of actual objects or from one of the many widely used picture symbol programs that are now available. Instead of pictures actual objects may be used, for example, a spoon may be used for breakfast; a ball may be used for physical education or recess time (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001).

Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS)

PECS was designed to help young children with autism initiate requests and communicate their needs. The system uses a behaviorally based program to teach the child to exchange a picture card for something he/she likes and wants. It starts with single pictures and then the pictures are combined with statements for requests. The pictures may be kept in a binder and used as needed. A teacher may add pictures at any time he/she feels the student needs them. Pictures may be used for classroom assignments and allowing the student to participate in classroom activities (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001).

For this project, behavioral interventions were designed to decrease inappropriate behaviors of students with autism. Strategies were introduced to be used in the general education classroom during instructional and non-instructional time. The goal was for the strategies to increase participation and time spent in the general education classroom while decreasing inappropriate behaviors.

Method

Participants

The focus of this project was directed at one second grade general education classroom, one third grade general education classroom, and one fourth grade general education classroom. The second grade class has two students with autism, third grade has one, and fourth grade has one. Each student has had the diagnosis of autism since before entering kindergarten. All of the students attend Springville Elementary School and receive varying types of special education services. General education teachers and paraprofessionals assigned to the students were trained in behavioral strategies. Each person participating had very little training in working with students with autism prior to this project.

Materials

Materials used in this project were PowerPoint presentations that were used to train teachers and paraprofessionals. Teachers and paraprofessionals were trained at an in-service on various behavioral strategies to use in their classroom to decrease the number of inappropriate behaviors from their students with autism.

Design and Procedure

Four students were selected to participate in the study. All students have a diagnosis on the autism spectrum scale. Teachers monitored the number of inappropriate behaviors exhibited by student with autism. The behaviors included outbursts during change of scheduling, refusal to complete assignments, lost assignments, apprehension to sitting during instruction, and self stimulating behaviors including but not limited to spinning objects, hand flapping, mouthing inappropriate objects and humming.

Teachers maintained the number of inappropriate behaviors by placing tally marks on the calendar. At the end of four weeks, behavioral strategies were introduced to teachers and paraprofessionals. The teachers began the implementation of the strategies and continued to tally the number of inappropriate behaviors for the next four weeks. At the end of this time, teachers completed a satisfaction survey in which their attitude toward students with autism was measured and the types of behavioral interventions they used were noted.

Scoring

Teacher Autism Questionnaire. Prior to the implementation of this project, all general education teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire anonymously in regards to their knowledge and experience with students with autism. Teachers were also asked to list different behavioral strategies they had used or were using with student(s) with autism. This data was used to choose behavioral strategies that were most appropriate for the students in the study.

Behavioral Tallies. The purpose of the behavioral tallies were for teachers to keep the track of the number of times a behavior was a distraction in the classroom. Each teacher was given a calendar grid and throughout instructional time within the classroom recorded the number of inappropriate behaviors. The behaviors recorded were outbursts during change of scheduling, refusal to complete assignments, lost assignments, apprehension to sitting during instruction, and self stimulating behaviors including but not limited to spinning objects, hand flapping, mouthing inappropriate objects and humming.

Teacher Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the satisfaction survey was to measure teacher's knowledge of autism, what behavioral strategies they implemented, and did classroom disruptions decrease after the implementation of behavioral strategies.

Results

Teacher Autism Questionnaire

At the beginning of this project, general education teachers were asked to anonymously complete an autism questionnaire. Twenty four questionnaires were returned. Based on the results of the questionnaire, teachers had the following amount of teaching

experience: one had zero to five years, nine had six to ten, six had 11 to 15, two had 16 to 20, three had 21 to 25, and three had more than 25 years.

Of the 24 questionnaire participants, eight currently have a student with autism in their classroom. All teachers have or have had a student with autism in their classroom. Six teachers reported that there was/is a paraprofessional with that student at all times. Thirteen teachers were included as a part of the IEP meeting/planning process for the student with autism in their classroom.

One hundred percent of the teachers returning the questionnaire reported they would be willing to participate in professional development activities about autism if given the opportunity. Teachers were split as how they felt about receiving enough support from the administration and special education teachers. Half felt as though they get enough support while the other half did not. Only one teacher felt as though teachers are prepared to work with students with autism upon the completion of college. Note: This teacher is a first year teacher.

Behavioral Tallies

Each time a student exhibited an inappropriate behavior, the general education teacher placed a tally mark on the calendar grid. The tallies were counted at the end of each week for the first 4 weeks. During week one the following amount of inappropriate behaviors were noted: Classroom one 16, classroom two 15, classroom three, 9. Week two totals were classroom one 18, classroom two 12, and classroom three, 10. Week three totals were classroom one 20, classroom two 16, and classroom three six. The final week of documentation before behavioral strategies were introduced were classroom one 17, classroom two 12, and classroom three nine.

After the implementation of behavioral strategies, teachers continued to keep tally marks on the calendar grid for 4 more weeks to determine if strategies were being effective. The following totals were reported for week one: Classroom one 14, classroom two 14, and classroom three nine. Week two totals were classroom one 10, classroom two eight, and classroom three six. Week three totals were as follows: Classroom one 10, classroom two eight and classroom three 10. Note on week seven, classroom three there was an increase in behaviors. The student in classroom three was extremely excited about his birthday and an upcoming weekend trip with his family. The final week in which behaviors were recorded the amount of inappropriate behaviors were classroom one 11, classroom two seven and classroom three five.

Teacher Satisfaction Survey

At the end of the program, a Teacher Satisfaction Survey was given to each teacher who participated in the project. Questions 1-3 were about how the teacher feels about having a student with autism in their general education classroom. Questions 4-5 were about dealing with behavior in the general education classroom. Question 6 was about participation in the student's IEP planning. Question 7 was a check list of behavioral

strategies used in the general education classroom for this project. On Question 1, all teachers responded that they are glad to have a student with autism in their classroom. Question 2, no teacher had ever requested a student with autism be in their classroom. Question 3, three teachers will and one will not request a student with autism be in a future class. Question 4, all teachers feel better prepared to work with a student with autism in their classroom. Question 5, all teachers are willing to share behavioral strategies with other teachers. Question 6, half of the teachers participated in the student with autism's IEP during the project time span. Question 7, the following behavioral strategies were used in the general education classrooms which participated in this study: social stories, peer modeling, picture/visual schedules, sensory box, sensory room, video modeling, weighted/pressure vests, first/then boards, choice boards, work stations, "home base," and assignment notebooks. The three classrooms which participated in this project consistently used social stories, first/then boards, and visual schedules.

Discussion

There was a positive change in students' behavior. This can be attributed to consistent implementation of behavioral strategies based on each student's needs. The strategies must continue to be used to maintain the level of expected behaviors from the students who participated in the study.

The number of students participating in the study was easy to handle, however a larger amount of students with autism might add more interest and accuracy to the study. Teachers were completely receptive to the strategies and were shocked at how simple some of them were because of the limited assistance they had received in the past. Teachers have agreed to continue the use of the behavioral strategies due to the positive impact they had on their classrooms.

Parental attitudes and participation were not measured during the study. It would be interesting to see if parents were using the behavioral strategies in various ways at home, if they too, would see a decrease in inappropriate behaviors.

The main limitation to the study was time. Doing the study within a nine week period did not give as much data as would be necessary to determine long term use of the behavioral strategies. It would be interesting to see if the behavioral strategies continue to be used for at least another school year if the students continue to show a decline in their inappropriate behaviors.

In spite of time restraints, the study was a success because the number of inappropriate behaviors decreased in each classroom. In fact, students started to request that certain strategies be used more often and in all classrooms (art, music, physical education). One paraprofessional who is also a mother to a student with autism thought the behavioral strategies were such a good idea that she started implementing many of them with her own son.

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Figure 1. Teacher Autism Questionnaire

Teacher Autism Questionnaire

1. Do you have a student with autism in your classroom? Yes or No
2. If not this year, have you had a student with autism in your classroom in the past?
Yes or No
3. How many years of teaching experience do you have? _____
4. Do you have any professional training in the area of autism? Yes or No. If yes,
briefly describe.

5. If you have had a student with autism, do you or were you offered professional
development/training in the area of autism? Yes or No. Briefly describe.
6. When included in your class, did or does the student have a paraprofessional with
them at all times? Yes or No
7. Were you a part of the planning process for the student's IEP? Yes or No
8. What strategies do you use or have you used to help students with autism in your
classroom?
9. Would you be willing to attend professional development training for autism? Yes
or No
10. Have you done any research on autism in preparation for a student with autism?
Yes or No. If yes, where?

11. Do you feel you received enough support from the administrators and special
education professionals with your student? Yes or No
12. Do you feel teachers are prepared to work with students with autism upon
completion of college? Yes or No
13. What type of information would benefit you when you have a student with
autism?
14. What problem behaviors have you observed with students with autism that you
feel training would be appreciated?
15. Feel free to use the space below to give any comments on students with autism
that you would like to share.

Figure 2. Teacher Satisfaction Survey

Teacher Satisfaction Survey

| | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Are you glad you have a student with autism in your classroom? | | |
| 2. Have you ever requested a student with autism be in your classroom? | | |
| 3. Will you request a student with autism in your class in the future? | | |
| 4. Do you feel better prepared to deal with behavior with students with autism? | | |
| 5. Are you willing to share behavioral strategies with other teachers? | | |
| 6. If your student has had an IEP meeting this semester, have you participated? | | |

7. Check the behavioral interventions you have used in your classroom with a student with autism:

- Social stories _____
- Picture Exchange Communication Systems _____
- Had peers to model appropriate play _____
- Music Therapy _____
- Visual/Picture Schedules _____
- Sensory _____
 - Rocking chair _____
 - Sensory box _____
 - Utilized sensory room _____
 - Other _____
- Applied Behavior Analysis _____
- Video Modeling _____
- Weighted/Pressure Vests _____
- First/Then boards _____
- Choice Boards _____
- Work Stations _____
- “Home Base” in classroom _____
- Graphic organizers _____
- Assignment Notebooks _____

Figure 3.

Graph Indicating Teaching Experience of Those Completing the Autism Questionnaire.

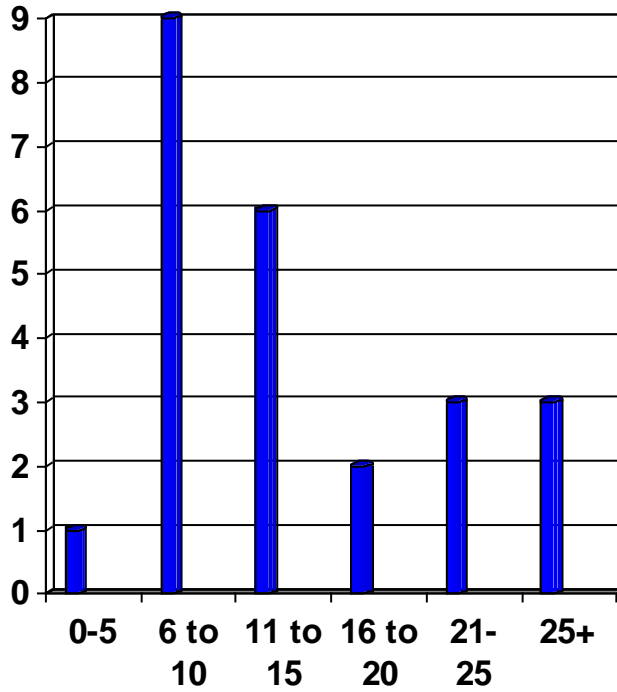
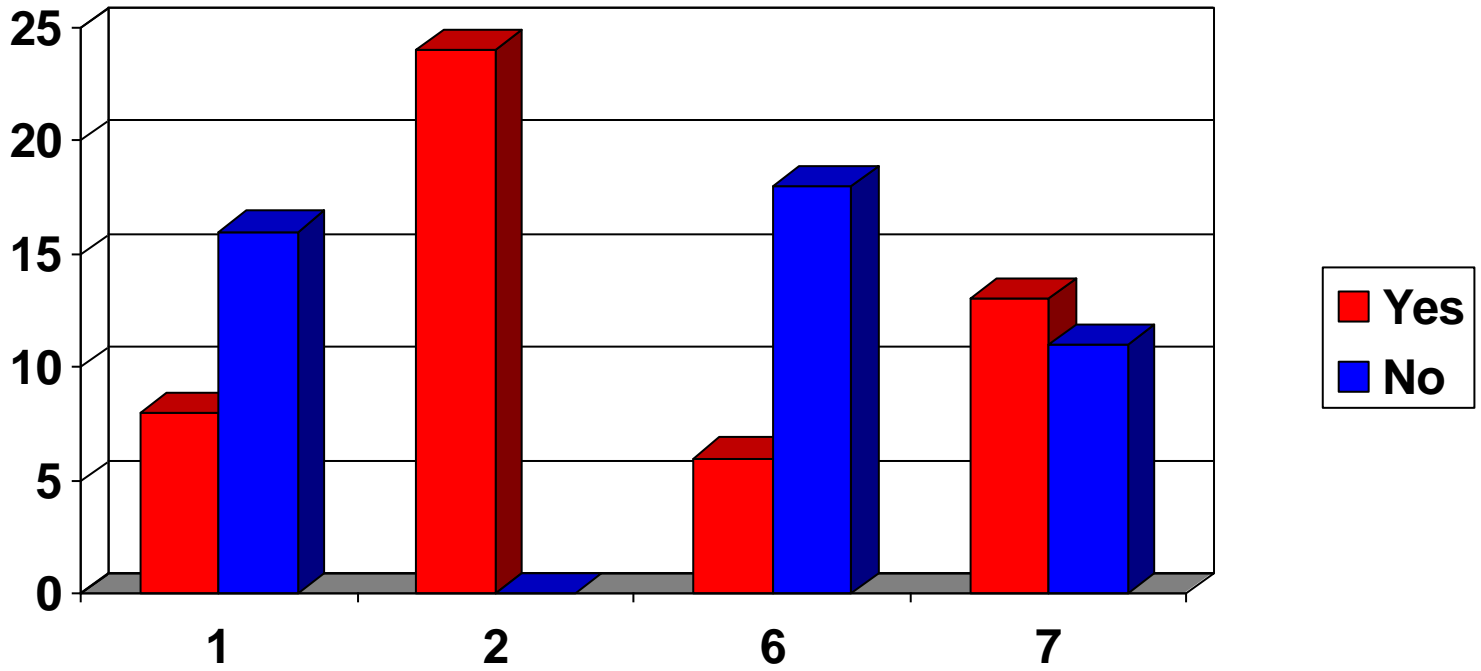


Figure 4. Responses to Questions 1, 2, 6, and 7 from Autism Questionnaire.



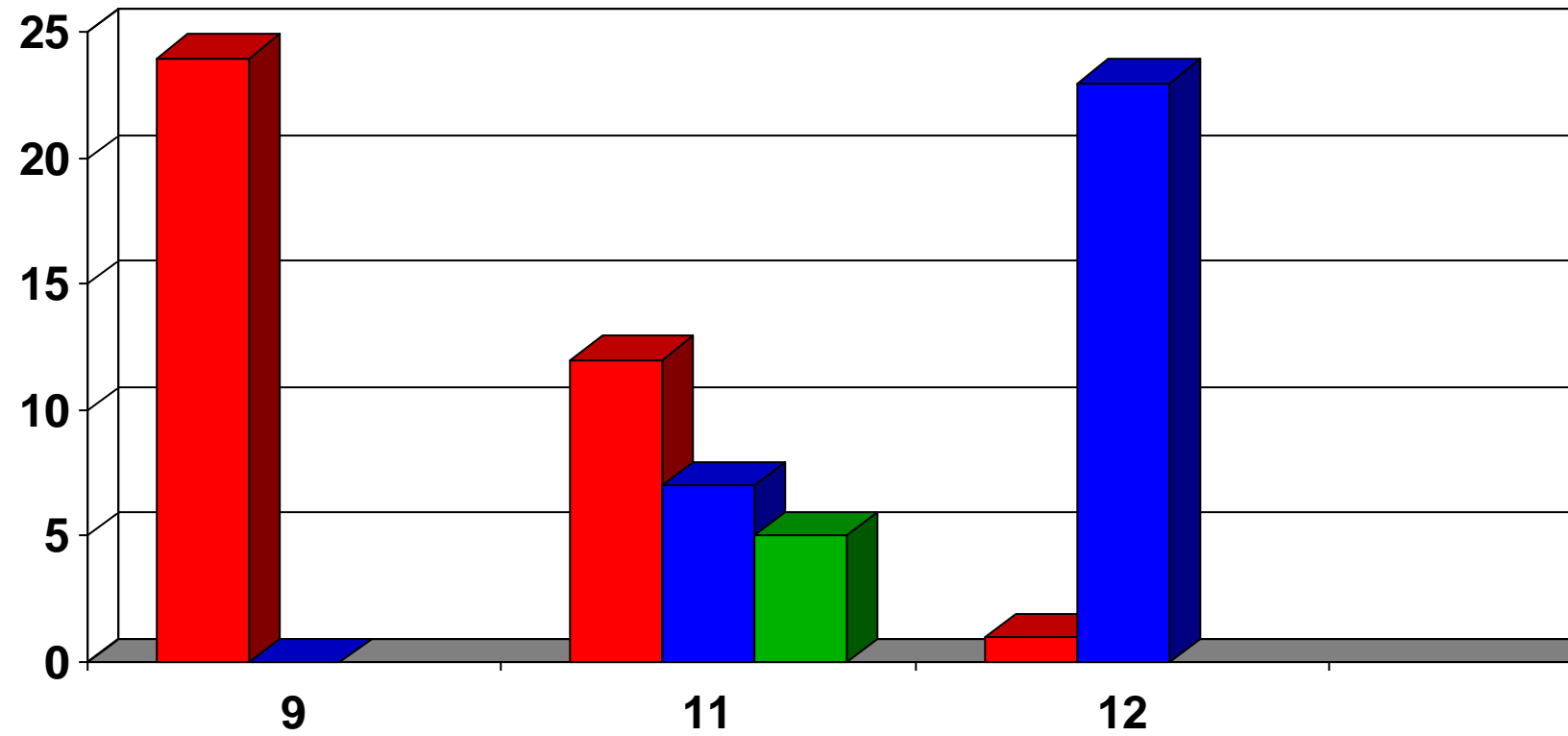
1. Student with autism currently in class?

2. Student with autism in the past?

6. Paraprofessional with student at all times?

7. Were you a part of IEP planning?

Figure 5. Responses to Questions 9, 11, and 12 from Autism Questionnaire.

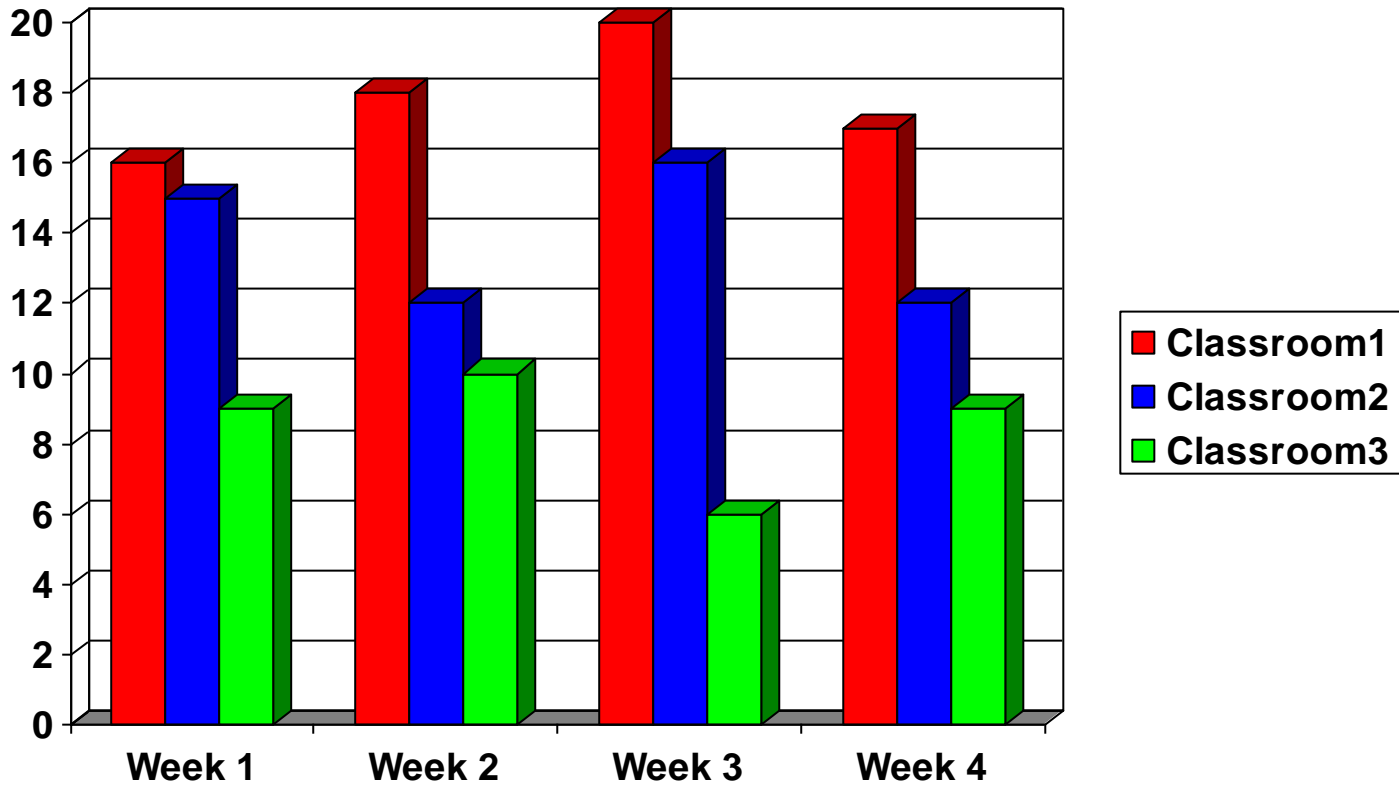


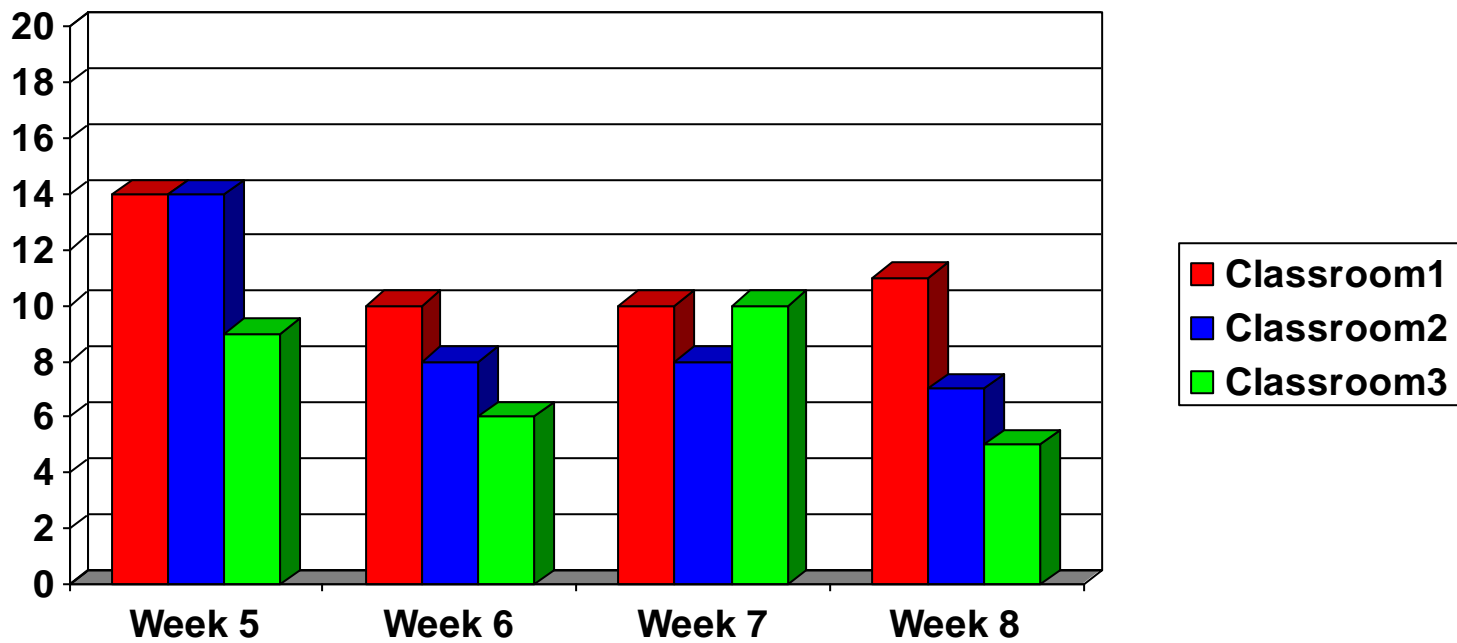
9. Willing to attend professional development?

11. Receive enough support from administrators and special education teachers?

12. Teachers are prepared to work with students with autism on completion of college?

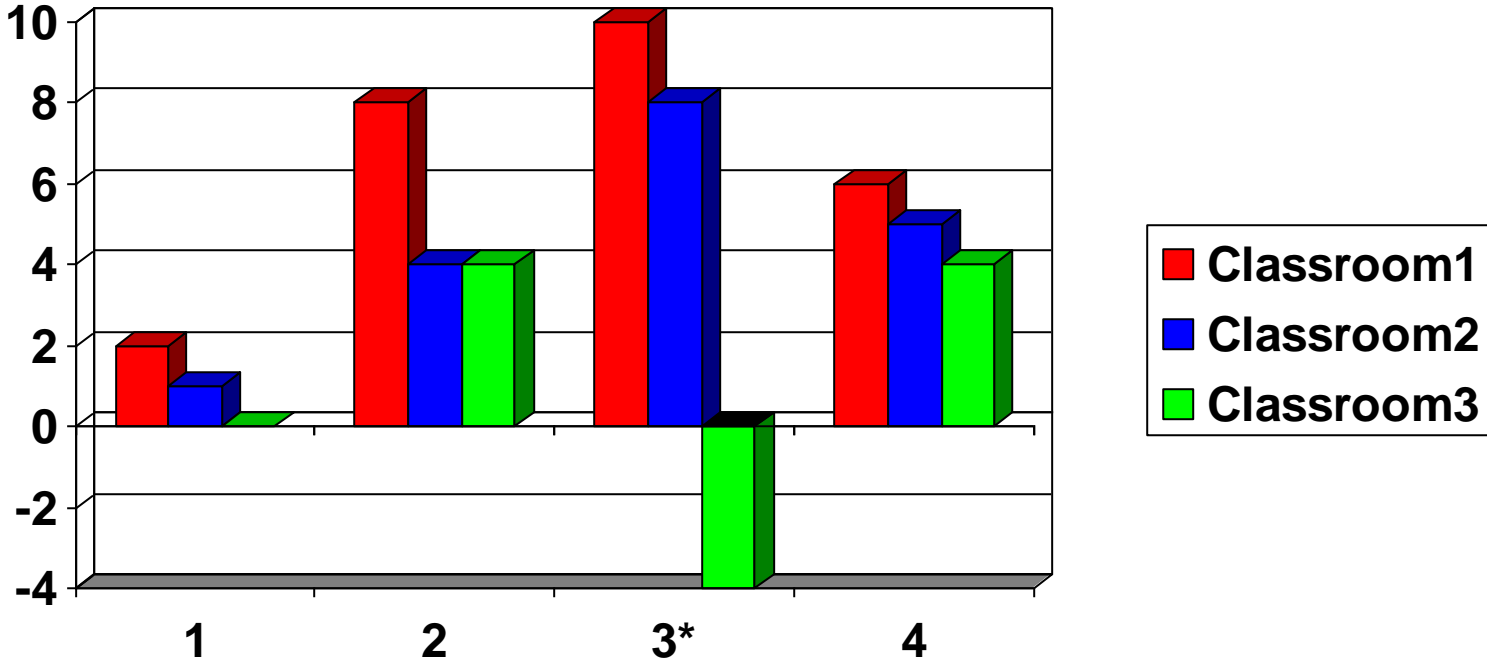
Figure 6. Difference in Behavioral Tallies During the Implementation Timeline.





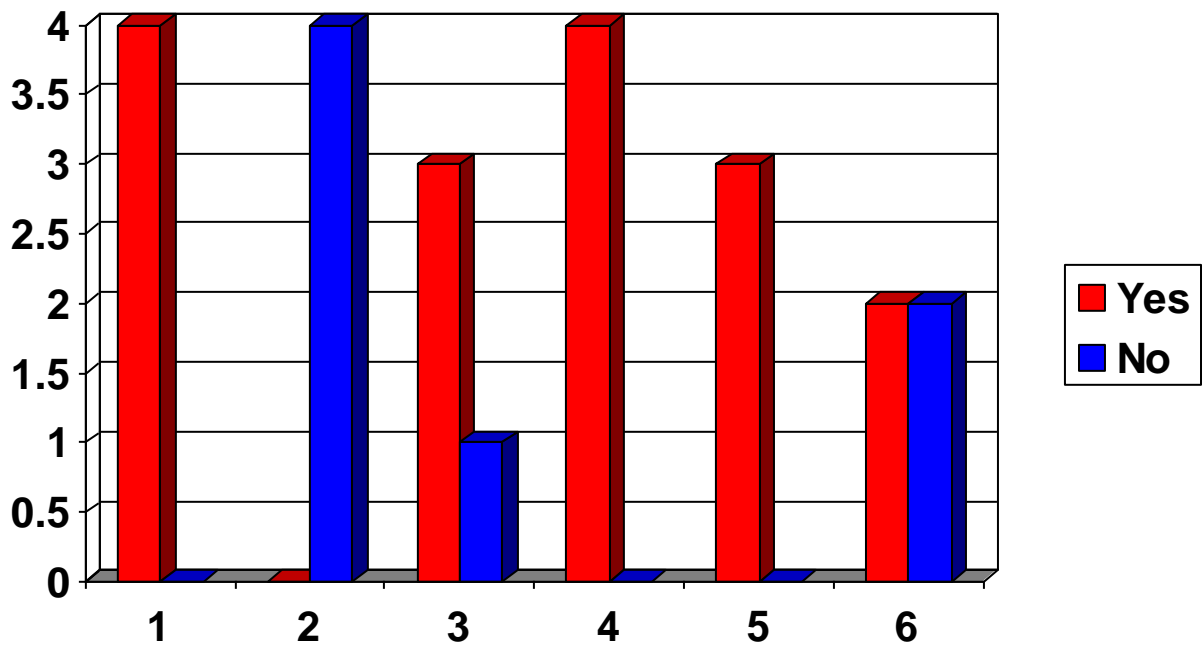
*Note: Week 7, Classroom 3- student was extremely excited about his birthday and a family trip that was planned for the weekend

Figure 7. Difference in Behavioral Tallies During the Implementation Timeline.



*Week #3- child excited about birthday and family vacation.

Figure 8. Results from Teacher Satisfaction Survey Upon Completion of Project.



1. Glad to have student with autism in classroom?
2. Requested a student with autism in classroom?
3. Request a student in the future?
4. Better prepared to deal with students with autism?
5. Willing to share strategies with others?
6. Participated in IEP meeting?

Figure 9. Types of Behavioral Interventions Used During Project by Classroom.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Classroom 1 used: Social stories Visual schedules Sensory room & box First/then boards Weighted vests Work stations</p> | <p>Classroom 2 used: Social Stories Peer Model Picture schedules Video Modeling First/then boards Home Base</p> |
|--|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Classroom 3 used: Social Stories Peer Models Visual Schedules Sensory Choice Boards Assignment Notebooks First/then Work stations</p> | <p>All had the following in common: Social Stories First/Then Visual Schedules</p> |
|--|---|

First Day
Sheila McKamy

First Day...

She looks really nice as she stands at the door,
I slump forward to meet her, staring at the floor.
What will she see when she looks at me?

Will she see me?

The teenager standing in front of her, hoping for a fresh start, a new year.

Does she only see the labels?

Has she read my file?

Did she already judge me as the trouble maker, the one who can't learn?

There is a file on me, and it usually beats me to the door.

It tells all about me and my past...

I guess they have to be told, so that they can plan for me.

Oh, how I wish I was a kid with no labels...a blank slate...

They say that I am LD and that I have ADHD.

I don't know what all those letters mean, I just know school is hard for me.

I hope that this teacher will be different.

I hope that she will give me a chance.

Be patient with me.

I promise to try my best...

Please see me and not my file when you look at me!

Give me a chance to show you what I can be.

I might surprise you at the things I can do.

Please see me!

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All submissions must have a cover letter indicating that the manuscript has not been published, or is not being considered for publication any where else, in whole or in substantial part. On the cover letter be sure to include your name, your address, your email address, and your phone number

As much as possible, typescript should conform to the following:

- Method of Manuscript Submission: Send Manuscripts should be submitted electronically with the words "Submission" in the subject line.
- Language: English
- Document: Microsoft Word
- Font: Times New Roman or Arial
- Size of Font: 12 Point
- Page Limit: None
- Margins: 1" on all sides
- Title of paper: Top of page Capitals, bold, centered,
- Author(s) Name: Centered under title of paper
- Format: Feature Manuscripts should follow the guidelines of fifth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2001).
- Figures and Tables: All should be integrated in the typescript.
- Abstract: An abstract of not more than 150 words should accompany each submission.
- References: Insert all references cited in the paper submitted on a Reference Page

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