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How to Manage an Outburst

Introduction

Special education teachers have a very unique role in the classroom compared to general education teachers. The behavior of students in these classrooms requires close attention and specific reactions by educators. One important task that special education teachers have to do is learn how to manage a student's outburst.

Understanding Students Needs

The first main step of managing an outburst is understanding each students particular needs. "FAPE", which stands for "Free Appropriate Public Education," is a regulation that requires schools to provide proper special education to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Each and every student has unique learning needs that are important for special education teachers to understand. In a special education class, there are many different disabilities along with different ranges of severity. With each disability comes different behavior and reactions. In order to meet their needs, students with disabilities are required to have an IEP, also known as Individualized Education Program ("FAPE"). Each IEP contains information regarding how the educator should teach the student in order to create a productive learning environment. In addition, special education teachers also need to create a safe space for the students.

Avoiding Conflict

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes the word outburst as “a sudden release of strong emotion.” In a special education classroom, an outburst can mean many things ranging from a small tantrum to a full-on rage involving violence. The second step that special education teachers need to learn about managing an outburst is how to avoid it in the first place. There are many times when a problem gets amplified due to the teacher’s behavior or reaction. Nicole Messick, a special education teacher at Hawes Elementary School, recommends that teachers “try to calm the student down” (“Messick”). If the student shows any problematic behavior, it is crucial that the teacher tries to get them to relax. There are multiple ways that teachers can get a student to settle down. Neomi Daniel is a paraeducator at Hawes Elementary School. The role of a paraeducator is to give aid to teachers by assisting students that need extra help. Mrs. Daniel says that lightly squeezing up and down the students arm, while simultaneously counting each squeeze out loud, is a simple way to help calm down a student (“Daniel”). Another way to avoid an outburst is to refrain from eye contact with the student (“Free”). Many times, the student is looking for attention and making eye contact will only make them act out more. Along with that, teachers should also avoid physical contact (“Free”). Engaging with a student in that state may elevate the situation. Teachers must try not to intensify the situation by getting involved when not necessary (“Free”).

Understand Rules

The next step is for special education teachers to understand the many rules about what actions are and are not appropriate to take in the classroom. It is mandatory that teachers follow direct protocol in response to each students behavior. When a school restrains a student for

behavior that their peers would not be restrained for, it is called different treatment. Different treatment is completely prohibited and is something that teachers need to be aware of. Section 504 prohibits disability discrimination. If a student is restrained inappropriately, it is a violation of Section 504 (“K-12”). Other important information that teachers must be educated about is the 15 principles. These fifteen principles are put in place as a guideline for teachers in order to provide protection for students from restraint and seclusion (“Resource”). The 15 Principles cover topics about discipline and the use of restraint and seclusion. When dealing with a severe outburst teachers may feel the need to resort to restraining or secluding a student. There are a lot of rules when it comes to restraining a student (“Messick”). These rules are put in place for the protection of students. Neither restraint nor seclusion should be used as routine safety measures and should only be used if there is danger of harm to oneself or others.

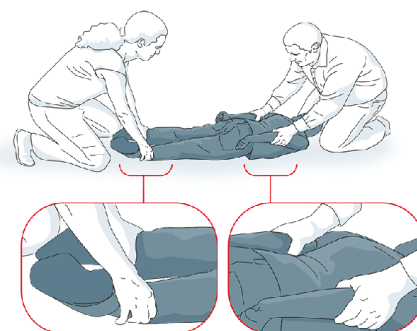
Restraint and Seclusion

When working in a special education class, conflicts are bound to occur. How the teacher reacts to these conflicts is very important. Teachers must try their best to solve the problem without physical contact with the student. Every effort should be made to prevent the need for the use of restraint and seclusion. If and only if the student poses a threat to harm themselves or others may the teacher use restraint or seclusion (“Resource”). There are two types of restraint, physical and mechanical. Physical restraint is a personal restriction that reduces the student’s ability to move any given body part. Mechanical restraint is restriction of a student’s ability to move through the use of any device or equipment (“K-12”). Mechanical restraints are not permitted and should in no circumstances be used by a school. Seclusion is involuntary confinement of a

student in a room where they cannot exit. Although seclusion is not permitted, it is allowed that a student go into a room without a lock or door to help them calm down.

Restraints

There are three main types of physical restraints called “holds”. These restraints are vital for teachers to learn so that they can stop any harmful behavior in the case of an outburst. The first restraint is called a prone hold. This hold involves 3 people, the student being held and two people who are administering the hold. The student is faced down to the ground as one person applies pressure at the ankles while the other person pins the student’s arms to their side. The second



(“Restraint”)

restraint is called a basket hold.

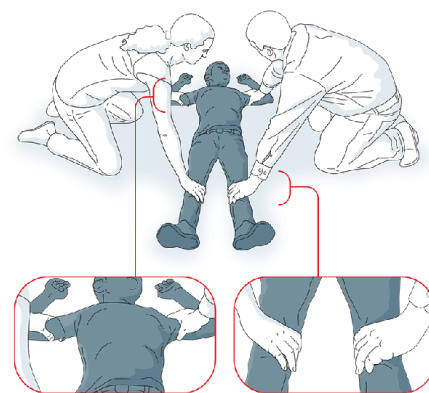
This hold only involves the administrator and the student. The student faces forward with the teacher standing behind. The teacher grabs the student's wrists, crosses them across their body, and holds them behind their back. This can be done while the student is lying down, sitting, or



(“Restraint”)

standing. The last restraint is called

a supine hold. This hold also involves 3 people, the student being held and two people who are administering the hold. The student is lying down on the ground, faced up. Both people administering the hold apply pressure on the knee and bicep.



(“Restraint”)

Example

Young Jimmy has autism and tends to be troublesome in class. Wyatt, Jimmy's classmate, steals his gluestick. Jimmy is very upset and starts to throw a small tantrum. Mrs. Smith gives Jimmy his gluestick back and tries to calm him down, but it is not working. Jimmy starts screaming and throwing a fit. Mrs. Smith tries to have him go into the "chill out" corner where students can go voluntarily to cool off. Jimmy does not want to go to the "chill out" corner. Now, he starts to get aggressive. He pushed Wyatt over and hit his hand on the desk. Jimmy is kicking and throwing things at people now. Mrs. Smith along with the other students are in danger. Mrs. Smith has no choice but to restrain him. She chooses to do the basket hold. She grabs his hands and holds them behind his back. She only holds him while he is kicking, but when he does not pose as a threat, she lets



("Calming")

go. Mrs. Smith successfully got him to calm down and now directs him back to his seat.

Conclusion

Safety of the students is the number one priority and learning how to manage an outburst is essential. If teachers follow the correct procedures and are properly educated on how to manage outbursts, the classroom can run smoothly and safely.

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