A Comparison of Behavior and Achievement of PRIDE Students with Emotional Disturbance in
General and Special Education Classroom Settings

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare PRIDE students' behavior and achievement in their general and special education classroom settings Participants were 10 students who had failed to meet the promotion requirements to move to the next grade level last year and were in a specialized program for emotionally disturbed (ED) students called P.R.I.D.E., which stands for the behavioral goals taught in the program: Positive, Respectful/Responsible, In Control, Dedicated and Empathetic. The purpose of PRIDE is to provide students with supports to help them successfully transition to general education classrooms. The researcher collected students' daily behavior ratings from their point sheets, daily grades and anecdotal notes in both their special (PRIDE) and general education classes. Participants' grades and PRIDE points earned in both settings were compared to help the researcher consider which behaviors were exhibited and how to improve behavior and academic performance in both settings. The t statistic comparing the PRIDE points in the two settings (3.19) was found to be statistically significant, (p<.002), so hypothesis 1 was rejected. The t statistic comparing mean daily grades in the Pride and Inclusion room of 2.784 (mean difference was 6.114 percentage points) was statistically significant (p< .006), so hypothesis 2 was also rejected. These findings indicated behavior and grades were rated higher in the PRIDE setting overall. The correlation between grades and behavior ratings in the inclusion room were statistically significant, so hypothesis 3 was rejected, but that was not the case in the PRIDE room, so hypothesis 4 was retained. However, the correlation between grades and points in the PRIDE room was also positive, so both correlations indicated that students who demonstrated better behavior (compared to the other participants) also tended to demonstrate better performance on academic tasks.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Education (1992) defines at-risk students as those who are likely to fail at school. School failure is typically seen as dropping out of school before high school graduation. Children at risk for academic failure frequently lack support and encouragement from parents or guardians. In many cases many of these children live in homes where basic needs may not be met. It is not unusual for a classroom teacher to have several students who have been labeled at risk in the Baltimore City Schools where this study is taking place. Often at-risk children need additional support for any chance to achieve success in an academic setting. However, even when classroom teachers identify students who are struggling academically or socially, they are often unable to dedicate the time needed to assist those students or implement solutions to their problems in general education settings.

This study will examine behavioral or academic differences special education students exhibit in a general education classroom in which they received no special supports for behavior or academic accommodations versus a self-contained ED PRIDE program in which they received individualized behavioral supports when needed. Student participants used PRIDE point sheets in each.

Overview

This study was conducted to show whether the ED PRIDE intervention strategies supporting at-risk learners in a differentiated special education classroom setting resulted in different behavior and achievement as compared to only using PRIDE point sheets in grade level

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inclusion classrooms. Ten participating students were considered emotional disturbed (ED) and had failed to meet the promotion requirements needed to move to the next grade level, making them at-risk. Their behaviors often impeded their academic performance and led to behavioral crisis. Due to some extreme student behaviors, much of their academic performance and progress and their ability to complete their required work is often hindered. Students were encouraged to use coping skills to return to the PRIDE class, however much of their learning is diminished after a crisis or a situation which requires them to be removed from the group. Depending on the severity of the crisis, students often do not return to class in a timely manner and miss instruction, which has a long-term effect on their grades.

Description of the PRIDE Program

Students enrolled in PRIDE receive additional support for their emotional disabilities but are also given the opportunity to transition into general education classrooms for additional grade level opportunities for socializing and work when they demonstrate their ability to maintain grades and behavior per the PRIDE program requirements. It should be noted that many of the students' behaviors are contingent on the classroom environment and teaching styles in addition to student needs and/or accommodations (such as medication, seating, extended time, etc.), so it is not unexpected that some students may succeed in one setting but not others. Other factors to be considered that may impact plans for and success in inclusion include the academic rigor, student motivation/interest, and individual student. In the PRIDE classroom, behaviors are monitored using daily PRIDE point sheets and observations. A copy of the point sheet is in Appendix A. Students use the sheet in the self-contained ED PRIDE classroom and while they

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are included in general education classrooms as well, as participants of the PRIDE program and per their behavioral support needs.

PRIDE was designed to help students manage their behaviors by providing comprehensive services in a structured and consistent environment. The services were designed to increase pro-social behaviors and learned coping strategies to manage emotional and behavioral responses while engaging in grade-appropriate state core curricula. Baltimore City schools which provide ED PRIDE Programs use a point and level system and monitor progress utilizing data from a daily point-sheet. Daily points result in rewards per their teachers and students' level promotions are based on their weekly averages. Students' points are tallied, and points determine if they earn small rewards such as positive feedback and more substainstial rewards such as free time or lunch bunch with a teacher of their choice. Failing to earn points results in a loss of privileges and students may earn consequences based on the level of their offense which can vary from a time-out, phone call home, or student referral to the support room, which is a designated room in the school where students are brought in after being restrained or removed from the classroom. Ideally, students are to enter the support room to deescalate and process their emotions before returning to class. The PRIDE program involves dedicated related service providers and develops individualized behavior contracts with each student to meet their needs and weekly social group goals and assist them in transitioning back into the general education environment. Transitioning from a least restrictive environment with the appropriate supports needed to help students re-integrate into a comprehensive school environment with nondisabled peers ultimately is the goal for all PRIDE students if possible. Due to students'

ongoing aggressive behaviors in PRIDE and in the general education classroom setting they are given the same physical supports when needed.

For this study, behaviors and grades of ten middle school students were compared as they participated in the ED PRIDE classroom and in inclusion classrooms. To assist with the transition students are provided differentiated strategies in both the ED PRIDE self-contained classroom and the general education classrooms. Depending on student needs, these could include flexible grouping, intervention activities, physical support, assistance with their work and modified instruction.   In both settings, all participants received their IEP supports and Behavior Intervention Plan's (BIP) and PRIDE point sheets were used to support and monitor success.

Statement of Problem

This study was conducted to determine whether grades and behavior differed for PRIDE students who participated in both a general education classroom setting with minimal accommodations and a self-contained differentiated classroom (PRIDE) setting where they received more accommodations.

Hypotheses

The main hypotheses were that PRIDE participants' behavior (assessed by PRIDE point sheets) and grades (averages on assignments) would not differ between a self-contained class and general education inclusion classes. Supports provided in the inclusion classrooms varied to meet individual students' identified needs per subject. The inclusion classrooms are departmentalized per subject and grade level. In addition to what teachers can provide in the

general educational setting. The same data were collected in both settings. The ED PRIDE

students in the study were all eligible for inclusion (for different subjects) at the start of the study

and were monitored using their point sheets and grades in both those general education classes

and the special education class setting.

The specific hypotheses tested follow:

ho1:   mean (average) PRIDE points per period in PRIDE classroom =

mean PRIDE Points per period in general education classroom(s)

ho2: mean daily grades in PRIDE classroom = mean daily grades in general education

classroom(s)

ho3:   r (PRIDE mean daily points, mean daily grades) in the general education classroom = 0

ho4:   r (PRIDE mean daily points, mean daily grades) in the PRIDE classroom = 0

Operational Definitions

Differentiated classroom

Teachers in differentiated classes use time flexibly, call upon a range of instructional

strategies, and become partners with their students so that both what is learned, and the learning

environment are shaped to support the learner and learning (Tomlinson, 2000) The ED PRIDE

classroom is a differentiated special education classroom. In the PRIDE special education class,

students utilize RRIDE point sheet, IEP, BIP and individualized support, therapeutic breaks,

additional staff supports and are in smaller classroom groupings with a staff to student ratio of

about 2:4

General education classroom

A general education classroom is one that is composed of students of whom at least 70 percent are without identified special education eligibility, that utilizes the general curriculum, that is taught by an instructor certified for general education, and that is not designated as a general remedial classroom (general education) and special education ,The Wrightslaw Way", 2020). In this study, students in the general education class utilize PRIDE point sheets, IEP, BIP and receive minimal support with academic work compared to the PRIDE setting. Students are also in a larger classroom setting with up to 35 students making the classroom to teacher ratio 1:35

Paraprofessional/Para educator

A paraprofessional is a person who is not licensed to practice teaching but serves as a support for instruction and student behaviors in the classroom.

ED PRIDE Point sheets

PRIDE point-sheets are sheets on which teachers track points earned by students daily. Students can earn up to 100 points daily. Student behaviors are rated on the point sheets every hour. Students can earn a total of 10 points maximum for compliance with 10 PRIDE goals, which are worth up to 2 points each. The point-sheets indicate whether students 1) follow directions, 2) are respectful, 3) commit to appropriate language, 4) demonstrate on-task behavior, and 5) exercise personal goals for a total of 80 daily points. Students can earn up to 20 additional points for their daily arrival, dismissal, and lastly homework; however, for the purposes of this study, only in-school classroom behavior ratings were studied.

On-Task Behavior

On-task behavior was defined as the following six possible behaviors.

> **1**. eyes on assignment or teacher or other classmates, if that is appropriate to the situation
>
> **2.** visibly appear to be working on a task if appropriate (e.g., pencil to paper; head in book)
>
> **3.** refraining from off task conversation when they are supposed to be listening, either to a teacher or other student in a discussion
>
> **4.** refraining from any behavior that is obviously off task
>
> **5.** raising hand to participate if appropriate
>
> **6.** contributing to appropriate classroom discussion (e.g., answering question posed by teacher, volunteering relevant information, contributing to a group discussion)

ClassDojo

ClassDojo is used to share points among teachers for the study. Class Dojo is a school communication platform that teachers, students, and families use every day to build close-knit communities by sharing what's being learned in the classroom through photos, videos, and messages. The information is shared between the PRIDE and inclusion teachers.

Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP)

A BIP is a written plan that teaches and encourages good behavior with the aim of preventing or stopping misbehavior. All PRIDE students have a BIP in addition to an IEP. A BIP has three key parts which first list the problem behavior, then describe why it is happening, then outlines strategies or supports to help increase desired behaviors.

IEP /The Individual Education Plan:

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written document that is developed for each eligible student with a disability who receives special education and related services. IEPs contain goals, objectives and are made by a team of professionals and include information about performance, including how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum; a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals; a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured, and when periodic progress reports will be provided; a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child; a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately towards his or her annual goals.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Through differentiated instruction strategies, teacher educators can meet the needs of all students, including Emotionally Disturbed (ED) PRIDE (Positive, Respectful/Responsible, In Control, Dedicated and Empathetic) students or at-risk learners. This research will provide practical ways for supporting ED students who are considered at-risk students in a diverse learning environment. The following sections will discuss literature focused on small-group instruction and inclusion for students with emotional disabilities. There will be a review of literature about the impact of ED in Baltimore City Public Schools, small-group instruction on student learning, factors that influence student work completion, the relationship between ED, at-risk, differentiated classroom, small group instruction, completion and strategies to improve student work completion.

Emotionally Disturbed Student

Emotionally Disturbed (ED) children have an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. They may be unable to develop and keep appropriate, satisfactory social relationships with family, peers, and adults in the school system. (Logsdon, 2020). In Baltimore city, only 15 of the 141 city schools met federally mandated progress goals in reading and math on the Maryland School Assessments. Despite repeated efforts to improve student learning outcomes, city efforts to improve student results have not been effective. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, city poverty and systemic environmental issues have a continuing impact on both students and teachers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Consequently,

students who are considered ED are placed in supportive programs which do not often cater to their academic needs. While in a Baltimore City School, it is expected that students are given supports, an adequate education and access to grade level material and instruction; however, this is not often the case.

Emotional and Social Development

Children need to understand emotions to have the ability to be socially ready for an academic setting. Self-concept is essential for a child as it defines who they are and offers a point of contact when they talk about themselves or a feeling to a peer. This will also lead itself into a child's ability to self-regulate their emotions. Students are placed in ED PRIDE because of their inability to do so. This is a significant part of childhood development, the ability to verbalize strategies which can help adjust emotional arousal about a situation that is happening. A child may have low self-regulation, and it will show in a behavior that is reactive to another behavior, occurring when they have an emotion linked to it (Peil, 2014). Children with low emotional self-regulation may have a tantrum, throwing themselves on the ground paired with screaming and crying; they can become aggressive and begin hitting the teachers, peers or harming themselves. This portion of emotional development is crucial for a child to be able to maintain and have the skills needed to help regulate their emotions appropriately so that they can learn and help others around them learn as well.

At-Risk Learners

According to a meeting of the Maryland State Board of Education in 2018, at-risk is defined as an individual who meets at least two of the eligibility criteria determined by the Department and an operator that may include: (1) Being eligible for free or reduced price meals; (2) A record of suspensions, office referrals, or chronic truancy; (3) A failure to achieve a proficient or advanced level on State assessments in reading or mathematics, or both; (4) Having a disability; (5) A referral from a teacher, counselor, social worker, or community based service organization; (6) The head of household is a single parent; (7) The head of household is not a custodial parent; (8) The adjusted gross family income is below the federally established poverty guidelines; (9) The family receives temporary cash assistance under the State Family Investment Program; or (10) A member of the family has been incarcerated.

Recent developments have helped make educators more receptive to early identification and prevention approaches. In addition to describing current best practices, innovations in screening and early identification are worth considering in addition to which structural characteristics, required accommodations, and critical features may make them more acceptable to educational users. Implications for the training of school psychologists in the screening and early identification of high-risk students are reviewed and recommendations offered for future research. Culturally and linguistically diverse students have the greatest need for quality instructional programs; many researchers argue that they are less likely to be taught with the most effective evidence-based instruction. If the vision of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is to be realized in the face of changing student demographics, research shows that teacher

education programs (TEPs) must embrace and instill in preservice teachers the concept of a culturally responsive pedagogy.

Richards, Heraldo, Brown and Ayanna (2007) state that a culturally responsive pedagogy facilitates and supports the achievement of all students. In a culturally responsive classroom, effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student development. The lack there of causes students in ED PRIDE to display student misbehavior in the classroom. Teachers have often identified challenging behaviors such as defiance to authority, disobedience, disrespectful words, and harassment. At-risk students can be disruptive in the classroom and their actions affect other students and teachers. The teacher's instruction is a vital part of the educational process, and children's skills are developed from their hours in the classroom, instructional practices, and curriculum support (Connor et al., 2011). The continuous process of learning will enhance student engagement. An effective strategy to manage class involves preparation, planning, procedures, and rules (Landrum, Scott, & Lingo, 2011).

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction engages students of all abilities as active learners, decision-makers, and problem solvers. It is a proven fact that differentiation within the classroom is effective, but sometimes it can feel overwhelming (Kluth & Danaher, 2010). It is important to know that students learn differently. This is a key tool in creating differentiated activities within groups that were created based on student interest and student readiness. This enables students in each group to reach the same goal; whether students need to be re-taught content or need

enrichment, these strategies show that differentiation within the classroom is beneficial to all students. The three main groups addressed when considering it are auditory, visual, and hepatic or kinesthetic. The suggestions for students can be used by the teacher as well. By understanding how students differ and learn more effectively, implementing supportive strategies will be helpful within the small groups. Students enter classrooms with different abilities, learning styles, and personalities. Educators are mandated to see that all students meet the standards of our district and state. Using differentiated instruction strategies, educators can meet the needs of all students and help them to meet and exceed the established standards. (Levy, 2008)

At-Risk: Resilience in Children

Succeeding against all odds is the meaning behind the term resilience. Despite the odds against them, there are at-risk students who have developed the disposition and necessary coping skills to succeed in school. At-risk students are having multiple suspensions and or expulsions, transiency, low-socioeconomic status or living at poverty level, single parent households, foster care and teenage pregnancy. Providing practical ways for differentiating content and instruction for at-risk students as an educator is imperative to their learning and academic success. Alternatives to instruction (per student performance) include independent study, extended time for assignments, providing resources such as materials and support students (Popp, Stronge & Hindman, 2003). Along with this is incorporating technology to meet the needs of at-risk learners. It is the hope that teachers and teacher educators will be equipped with strategies that they can use in the classroom to help at-risk learners succeed academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

The Impact of Inclusion

In order to fully understand the idea of inclusion, it is important to look at the history of special education and how it became what it is today. The breakthrough in special education began with the passing of Public Law (PL) 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975. This law guaranteed individualized 'special education' for every student who is identified as mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, speech impaired, hard of hearing or deaf, visually handicapped, deaf-blind, orthopedically impaired, other health impaired, or multi-handicapped (Murphy, 1996). This law mandated that these students be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) which is most suitable to meet their needs. This refers to a continuum of services ranging from regular education to home-schooling. When deciding which level of the continuum is most appropriate for a student, it is important to look at many factors. These factors may include the student's disability, severity of the disability, age, cognitive levels, emotional and behavioral issues, and the resources provided for the student through the school district or community. After taking these aspects into consideration, one must then consider whether inclusion is the right placement for the student.

Student Motivation

Student motivation is just one of the many things that impacts student learning and overall classroom experience for teachers and students. Small-group instruction can offer students a learning experience. Studies show that small-group instruction leads to better self-confidence for reading in students. According to Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor & Cardarelli (2010), "within small reading groups, males perceived themselves as problem-solvers in cooperating learning environments" (p. 114). This shows that students working in small groups shifted their mindset of themselves as learners and leaders which is a more positive self-image. In addition, students "preferred working in mixed-ability groups and pairs the most. They perceived getting more help within these groupings" (p. 114). Mixing student ability within the small group can lead to students teaching each other, which helps to cement knowledge. A smaller teacher-to-student ratio allows for students to ask and answer questions, as well as allowing for teachers to take notice of the students who might not be fully understanding the skill at hand. This then allows the teacher to provide additional interventions as needed. Ultimately, providing students with a positive learning experience and environment will support them to become productive citizens within and beyond the school; students also need positive mindsets about self and school, along with social awareness and responsibility (Stafford-Brizard, 2016).

The Power of Small Group Instruction

Small group instruction is an effective way to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of our students. Teachers can use small group instruction to better support the needs of their students addressing their needs. The different types of strategies used have numerous benefits

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when small group instruction is implemented; students develop relationships with many of their classmates, are given opportunities to discover commonalities, strengths and weakness as well as ways to help each other and the teacher has more time to meet the needs of her most challenging students who may require greater guidance while giving her high achievers time to work independently at a pace that promotes active learning. (Willis, 2006)

Classroom Management

Classroom setup is an important component in a learning environment because it is an essential piece of classroom management to support both teaching and learning. The physical atmosphere of the classroom can help prevent behavior issues as well as promote and improve learning particularly when working with students with special needs. The structuring of the learning environment is essential for teachers and students. In fact, studies show that the physical arrangement of the classroom can affect both student and teacher behavior, and that a well-structured classroom environment plan of design can improve learning and behavior. A supportive learning environment can mean the difference between having a good day and a bad day (Cox, 2016).

Classroom arrangement is the physical foundation of where students will learn. The structure of the classroom, where students will be seated, how the students will move about the classroom, and the whole classroom atmosphere needs to be considered, as well as how the classroom will be structured to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students. The physical arrangement of the classroom should also be reflective of the student body and must be consistent with the needs of all learners. The way a classroom is physically arranged, and the classroom environment, needs to be considered. All attributes of a structured learning

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environment need to be considered when setting up a classroom for all students but particularly those with disabilities. When considering inclusion for students with ongoing behavioral concerns and intervention strategies, creating a consistent and nurturing classroom environment that supports student learning is important for all students (Cox, 2016).

The research shows that students can often benefit from differentiated instruction and an accommodating classroom environment. With proper supports, much of the research indicates the importance of understanding all learners. A teacher's responsibility is more than implementing curriculum. It is important that an educator can properly define disabilities in order to implement those supports. If other professionals took the time to create these groups based on student learning profiles, student readiness, and student interests, they would see a tremendous growth in student confidence, motivation, but more importantly student achievement. Through the implementation of these different groups, students would be excited to take on the goals for that instructional time. (Moyer, 2011)

Teachers have the most impact on student learning despite a student's disability due to their ability to enrich student behavior and academic abilities. Behavioral concerns that arise may not often be controllable with students with disabilities but can indeed be supported so they can be successful as lifelong learners.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a difference in student

behavior (reflected in points earned) and grades (mean grades on assignments in the study

interval) for a sample of ED students who used the PRIDE behavior intervention plan and point

sheets while participating in both general education classrooms and a special education

(differentiated) classroom.

Design

A pre-experimental one-group post-test only design was used to compare participating

students' academic and behavioral performance in their inclusion and self-contained special

education classrooms. While the students were given supports in both rooms, they received

additional and more individualized supports in the PRIDE special education classroom for a

variety of reasons, some of which were described in Chapter One. Students' behaviors were

monitored throughout the study interval using PRIDE program behavioral point sheets in both

types of class settings. The point sheets tallied the exhibition of the following desired behaviors

during each class period: follow directions, be respectful, commit to appropriate language,

demonstrate on task behavior, and exercise personal goals. Participants could earn up to 10

points per period with a daily maximum of 80 points. Mean points per period and mean grades

on assignments per period were calculated during the study and compared across the inclusion

and special education settings to see if they differed significantly. Based on their ratings, students

had the opportunity to earn the privilege of participating in "Fun Friday" activities depending on

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their accumulated points. During each Monday morning meeting, students and teachers discussed rewards (these were activities or treats, often suggested by the students), towards which students would work as a group. Students earned points individually to participate if the group met the expectations to earn the reward.

Participants

All ten participants were enrolled in a fifth-grade ED PRIDE program in a Baltimore City Public schools for the 2019- 2020 school year.   In addition to demonstrating low academic performance, participants also exhibited behaviors which contributed to their learning and achievement difficulties. All ten students in this study were classified as at risk and categorized as below grade level and were diagnosed with ADHD and/or ED (emotionally disabled). Each of the student participants has a history of physical aggression towards staff and peers.

This group contained six male students and four female students, all of whom identified as African American. All the students in the program received special education due to being identified as emotionally disturbed (ED) and having IEP's (individual education plans) making them eligible to participate in inclusion classrooms for Math and English Language Arts (ELA) for an hour a day per subject. Each received specific service hours for academic instruction in the inclusion classroom then returned to the PRIDE classroom for group and support services as needed. These students were monitored for their behaviors in both the ED PRIDE classroom and the general education classrooms in which they participated.

Instruments

PRIDE point sheets

All target behaviors on the ED PRIDE point sheet were documented daily by teachers for ED PRIDE students in both their general education (inclusion) and special education classrooms. Points earned reflected behaviors and determined whether students earned additional privileges such as free time or other daily or weekly rewards. A copy of the ED PRIDE point sheet is found in APPENDIX A.

Grades

The mean percent correct earned on each assignment in each setting was recorded each day in both the PRIDE and Inclusion settings. Assignments in the PRIDE room and general education classes included: Independent classwork, exit tickets, quizzes or tests. There is no defeminated assignment in both classrooms. Students receive grade level assignments in both classrooms.

Anecdotal Notes

Anecdotal notes were recorded to document the frequency with which common behavioral concerns were noted and the usage of interventions to support the implementation of students' behavior intervention plans (BIPs). Anecdotal notes were recorded in addition to data on the daily PRIDE point sheets.

A copy of an Anecdotal record form is posted in Appendix B.

While no technical data are available, the point sheets and anecdotal information are used in PRIDE programs throughout Baltimore City schools and the data from them are used for criterion-referenced assessment and to report academic and behavioral progress and concerns.

Procedures

PRIDE points earned each period and grades on all assignments were collected hourly via classroom observation and daily monitoring by the classroom teacher and para educator in both the general and special education class settings. The settings in which points and grades were earned each day was also recorded so the PRIDE points and grades data from the inclusion and special education settings could be compared.

At the end of the study interval, averages of both points and grades in each setting were computed and compared to see if they differed across general and special education settings (hypotheses 1 and 2). Correlations between grades and PRIDE points were also calculated to see if the relationship was significant in either setting (hypotheses 3 and 4). Results follow in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

As noted in Chapter I, this study was conducted to determine whether grades and behavior differed for PRIDE students in general education classroom settings with minimal accommodations or a self-contained differentiated classroom (PRIDE) setting which afforded students more accommodations. The two main hypotheses tested were that PRIDE participants' behavior (assessed by PRIDE point sheets) and grades (averages on assignments) would not differ significantly between a self-contained class (PRIDE) and general education (inclusion) classes.

The same data were collected in both settings. The ED PRIDE students in the study were all eligible for inclusion (for different subjects) at the start of the three weeklong study and they were monitored using their point sheets and grades in both their general education classes and the special education class setting.

The specific hypotheses tested follow:

ho1:   mean (average) PRIDE points per period in PRIDE classroom =

        mean PRIDE Points per period in general education classroom(s)

ho2:   justified

ho3:   r (PRIDE mean daily points, mean daily grades) in the general education classroom = 0

ho4:   r (PRIDE mean daily points, mean daily grades) in the PRIDE classroom = 0

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested by computing and comparing mean points reflecting

behavior and

grades in the PRIDE and Inclusion settings. Descriptive statistics follow in Table 1 and the

results of the two paired samples (dependent) t-tests follow in Table 2.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for PRIDE points and Grades in the PRIDE and Inclusion Settings

Variable	N	Mean	s.d.	SEM
Mean DAILY PRIDE POINTS Inclusion Room	7.543	115	2.919	.272
Mean DAILY PRIDE POINTS PRIDE Room	8.444	115	2.066	.193
Mean DAILY GRADES Inclusion Room	62.626	123	23.046	2.078
Mean DAILY GRADES PRIDE Room	68.740	123	16.015	1.444

Table 2

Results of T-test for dependent samples comparing Mean Pride points and Grades in the PRIDE

and Inclusion Settings

Comparison	Mean Difference	s.d.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed) (p value)	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
PRIDE-INCLUSION	.902	3.032	3.19	114	.002	.283	.342	1.462

ROOM POINTS								
PRIDE-INCLUSION ROOM GRADES	6.114	24.351	2.784	122	.006	2.196	1.767	10.460

PRIDE POINTS

The mean PRIDE points earned per period attended in the PRIDE room were 8.444 and

the standard deviation was 2.066. The mean PRIDE points earned in the Inclusion room were

7.543 and the standard deviation was 2.919. The mean difference between them was .902 points

per period, with points tending to be slightly higher and similarly varied in the Pride Room. The

t statistic comparing the PRIDE points in the two settings (3.19) was found to be statistically

significant, ($p<.002$), so hypothesis 1 was rejected, meaning the mean points in the Pride Room

were likely meaningfully higher than those in the Inclusion Room.

GRADES

The mean grades in the PRIDE room were 68.740 percent and the standard deviation was

16.015 percentage points. This was higher and similarly but less varied than the mean grades in

the Inclusion room, which averaged 62.626 percent and had a standard deviation of 23.046

percentage points.

The t statistic comparing mean daily grades in the Pride and Inclusion room of 2.784 (mean

difference was 6.1142 percentage points) was statistically significant ($p< .006$), so hypothesis 2

was also rejected, indicating that the mean grades in the Pride Room were significantly higher

than those earned in the inclusion class than would be expected by chance, given the sample size.

CORRELATIONS

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested to determine whether the correlation between points and grades was statistically significant in either setting. Table 5 (below) presents the Pearson Product Moment correlations between these variables. For the Inclusion room, a correlation of .294 was found between grades and PRIDE points, which was large enough to be considered statistically significant ($p<.001$). In the PRIDE room, a correlation of .118 was found, which was not large enough to meet criteria for statistical significance ($p<.199$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was rejected and hypothesis 4 was retained.

Table 3

Correlations between grades and PRIDE points in the Inclusion and PRIDE Room Settings

	Correlation between Grades and PRIDE points	**Significance level of correlation (p)**	**n**
Inclusion Rom	.294*	.001	117
PRIDE Room	.118	.199	121

*statistically significant

Descriptive /tallies of anecdotal behaviors in ED PRIDE vs. inclusion room

Finally, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize and compare the frequency with which the 9 anecdotal behaviors occurred in each setting. The Anecdotal tracked common target behaviors and included the following: 1) AWOL-leaving the classroom without permission, 2) NT- not on task, 3) NC- on task no concerns, 4) SP-sleeping, 5) SR- support

room, 6) RES-restraint, 7) EST-physical escort, 8) CC-calming corner and 9) BRK-Break . The

chart shows the mean frequencies of each in each type of class, the differences in the means

across settings (Mean Differences) and T scores, which were computed to compare the

differences in the those means. The significance (p) values indicated that only the differences in

mean frequencies for anecdotal 7 (physical escort (EST)) and 9 (break (BRK)) were statistically

significant and these were both noted to occur more often in the Pride than the Inclusion settings.

Overall, independent breaks, use of the calming corner and being off task were the most common

Anecdotal in both settings. "No concerns" were also noted in Anecdotal from both settings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine whether grades and behavior differ for PRIDE students in general education classroom settings with minimal accommodations or a self-contained differentiated classroom (PRIDE) setting with more accommodations. Null hypotheses were rejected as there were differences in students' behavior and grades in the PRIDE classrooms versus the general education classrooms from week-to-week with added support were tested and rejected.

Implications of the Results

The results indicated that the participants, on average, performed better in terms of behavior and grades in the PRIDE setting than the inclusion class settings. Hence, hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected. As attendance and behaviors affected the consistency in which students earned their overall points in the three weeks this study was observed and as on some days the averages were similar. these results should be interpreted with caution. Despite the additional support strategies implemented with the PRIDE group, very few students were able to use self-regulating skills and remain on task in the general education classroom.

All students made progress week-to-week in their ability to use group skills and take breaks using the common corner and or independent space. The students seemed motivated to want to do better each week and were happy to see that they were earning more points which led to their ability to earn their Friday fun day treat. They acknowledged the progress they were making, and their increased confidence and motivation became more apparent each week. However, it is important to consider the threats to validity of the study, discussed below.

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Theoretical Consequences

Theoretical consequences of this study include the suggestion that at-risk learners'

behaviors may potentially improve in both a special needs classroom and general education

with more differentiated supports. For example, using self-regulating skills and a "calming

corner" that were made available in both classrooms. The calming corner and self-regulating

skills while were the same looked different in both classrooms. Due to the class size in the

general education classroom, the break space was limited to a small desk facing the wall in

the back corner of the classroom, whereas in the PRIDE classroom the smaller class size

allowed for the teacher to be flexible and creative in designing an explicit more spacious

calming corner that was inviting and comfortable for the students. This technique was used

__.484 times per period per student in the inclusion room and __.541 times per student per

period in the PRIDE room. Practicing restorative breathing and self-regulating techniques the

"calming corner" is a structured breathing space for students to use when they become

frustrated, overwhelmed, and or anxious needing a break. Students with challenging

behaviors found that using the calming corner proved to be effective. These corners included

a variety of tools to facilitate self-regulation, including a bean bag, kinesthetic stress balls

and fidgets. Depending on the student's behavioral needs and support they were able to

utilize the fidgets and self-regulating tools and/or be supported by an adult of their choice to

help de-escalate their behavior and focus on learning and earning their daily points.

It was noted by the researcher that the self-motivation and confidence of students

in every group increased and they were more engaged in class when they learned of their Fun

Friday on Monday morning during class meeting. Students were more inclined to independently apply the self-regulating strategies that were modeled in their therapy group when reminded of their goals. It was apparent that as their self-confidence grew, they were able to correct some behaviors and ask for a break before returning to work instead of escalating or getting off task. Students who did go AWOL often were triggered by peers and or the new subjects being introduced. During the study there were an average of .066AWOL's per period in the PRIDE class and an average of .074 in the inclusion class.

In addition to responses to academic rigor, some of the behaviors appeared not warranted by anything other than their lack of medication and or attendance. Staff support was an engaging strategy used in this study, and one that the students truly seemed to enjoy. They looked forward to working with support staff when they were having behavioral issues and needed additional academic support. Working towards their goals each week and working to earning their Friday treats in the beginning of the week helped even the students with the most challenging behaviors to perform at the end according to the data collected. It encouraged them to take their behaviors seriously and to practice their self-regulating skills-asking for a break and support when needed so they could remain on task, earn their points and earn their Fun Friday treat.

These findings relate to theory and best teaching practice suggesting that behaviors may potentially improve in both a special needs classroom and general education with more differentiated supports.

Connections to Prior Research

This study connects to many reviewed in chapter 2. For example, it relates to the idea that student motivation is just one of the many influences on student learning and overall classroom experience for teachers and students (Greenfield, et al., (2010) In that the researcher can suggest that the effectiveness of morning meetings that provide students with an overview of potentially earning a Fun Friday treat and or activity contributes to their motivation in the classroom.

The findings of this study also suggested that small-group instruction seemed to offer students a better overall learning experience. Studies show that small-group instruction leads to better self-confidence in students (Greenfield, et al., (2010). The findings of this study suggested that providing practical ways for differentiating content and instruction for at-risk students as an educator helps improve behavior which then correlates with their learning and academic success. According to a research study exploring The Impact on Student Achievement within Small Groups Based on Learning Styles, Interest, and Student Readiness by Moyer, (2011) The study explores how small group instruction is effective to student learners. The researchers state that this allows them to understand the content in a way that is specific to their learning styles. As students are placed in groups based upon student readiness, they can pick up materials and resources that are at their personal level of instruction and/or understanding. Through this type of grouping, students were challenged at their own personal level of instruction. They could build the confidence they needed to continue through the material at a successful rate. (Moyer, 2011)

It is imperative that effective teachers meet academic needs by providing opportunities to demonstrate student learning and assess student learning. In this study and others, teachers use

different assessment information which impacts their ability to identify and respond to the range of student needs and abilities in their classrooms (Pop, et al., 2003).Teachers of at-risk students often provide feedback on assignmnets and behaviors. Students who lack support to succeed in one or more of the following areas: societal, familial, and school are likely to have trouble or fail at school. As the previously noted understanding at risk-students and other societal factors impacting behavior and achievement are important to consider.

An example of successful support seen in the PRIDE room during this observation includes the para educator being able to deescalate a student supporting them in expressing their specific needs in the moment. By doing so the student was able to calm down and transition independently to use self-regulating strategies to deescalate then later transition into the classroom to complete work. In the general education classroom students in this study were not always addressed in their moment of need or support being that the classroom was larger in size. In both settings, however students had access to supports such as the calming corner, self-regulating fidgets, access to additional staff for breaks and more. The participants in the study also developed the ability to express a need for an independent break with support and refrain from leaving the smaller general education classroom without permission.

The participants in the study did not show a drastic change in their behaviors over this brief study, however student motivation while not measured by the researcher appeared to play a factor for their ability to complete their academic work. The study's results suggested additional support and breaks for these participants affected their performance because when students' behaviors improved so did their academic work and performance. Flexible teaching, multiple breaks, a calming corner and transitioning into the general education classroom all contributed to

developing self-regulating skills that improved student learning. The researcher observed an increase in student engagement, motivation and confidence in this study as did other researchers like and Pop et al. (2003) who found fill that smaller group sizes are beneficial for instruction when working with challenging students who may lack motivation.

Threats to Validity

Several threats to validity were present in this study. The observation took place over the course of only three weeks, in which the special education teacher was absent for three days due to illness. as were several students. Student participants also missed school due to truancy and a move. It would have been more beneficial if there were more time to narrow the behavioral concerns and achievement gap between the struggling students and those who were new to transitioning out of the PRIDE classroom. There were several days that were compromised due to behavioral challenges such as fighting and staff absences.

Absences and early dismissals also impacted the duration of the study and amount of data collected. The school in which this study took place has early release every Friday at 1pm for staff and teacher professional development. One day was also impacted due to an unanticipated lockdown. This caused some students to be upset and off task. Due to some physical aggression and violence, some assignments were adjusted in order to meet the lessons tasks and objectives. As a result, students were not able to earn full credit or given ample time and opportunity to resubmit assignments for corrections and or extra credit.

There were a few days during the study on which students' Chromebooks were taken to use for testing in other classrooms. This lessened the access to technology from five devices

to two, which limited the number of students who could access Google classroom assignments to be completed for a grade.

An additional threat to validity was the lack of diversity in the groups. Participants were all students of color and all were identified as Emotionally Disturbed per their IEP's. These students struggled with regulating behaviors due to their disability, in addition to having various academic concerns. All but one of the students in the groups was performing on grade level. Students raised in low socioeconomic families are often at a higher risk of developing difficulties and not typically consistently supported or exposed to a language or print-rich environment due to a lack of resources and experience at home (Popp, Grant & Stronge, 2008).

Another threat to validity which may have affected the data was that students in the general education classroom often copied answers or worked with peers to complete tests, class work and sometimes homework despite being given clear directive that work was to be completed independently.

Although these students had attendance and tardiness issues, they still received extra academic and behavioral support in both classrooms during small group instruction. A solution to this problem would have been to exclude the data for these students in order to eliminate this threat to validity. Despite their inconsistent attendance, students generally improved their behaviors and academic scores from week-to-week, suggesting differentiation supported positive behavior and grades. The inclusion classroom showed less progress than the PRIDE ED classroom. While students were supported and given similar

accommodations, the classroom size, and flexibility in teaching in the general education

classroom was not causing students to perform differently in both classrooms.

Implications for Future Research

Additional research about student behaviors, academics and progress in special,

differentiated and general education classes would provide insight into what methods work best

for teaching students with emotional disabilities and helping them succeed in general education

settings. The duration of this study could be lengthened to provide more insight about how

behavioral supports work and impact students' mastery of self-regulation and their skills which

impact learning and success at school. A longer study would also be more valuable to analyze

the overall development of student performance and behavioral growth and their impact on

attitudes about school and social relationships. This would provide important data for each

student as they move from more to less restrictive educational settings with appropriate

accommodations and supports.

Conclusion

This study was completed to determine whether grades and behavior differed for a sample of

10 PRIDE students in their general education classroom settings, where they received fewer

accommodations and their self-contained differentiated PRIDE classroom where they received

more accommodations. The results showed that the behaviors and grades in the PRIDE

classroom were better overall (hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected). While, most students

completed their assignments in both classrooms the study's data suggests that students performed

better in the PRIDE classroom as shown in Table 2. Teachers can use this information as they

support all learners, particularly at-risk students, who transition to and from inclusion classrooms. Findings in this study also indicate that teachers should collaborate with general educators and implement differentiated self-regulating strategies in both types of classrooms. Reports suggested that the most common behavioral concerns in the general education classes were students going AWOL, sleeping, and not on task and the most common behavioral concerns in the special education class were students not being on task, needing a physical escort, and taking a break. This data was informative as it suggests that while the point and grade data indicated students performed better in the PRIDE room, this might be attributable to benefits of the smaller setting and higher staff: student ration in the PRIDE room compared to the general education classroom.

Overall, the results suggested that behavioral and academic interventions supporting at-risk learners make a difference. Future research can extend these results to study the impact of different types of behaviors and academic achievement to assist with planning and meet the needs of more diverse populations of students. This research shows that assisting learners in both types of classroom with self-regulating strategies and academic supports, educators can help deflect negative behaviors in both smaller differentiated and general education classrooms. Teachers whose students are transitioning from self-contained classes like ED PRIDE into general education classrooms should collaborate with teams to implement differentiated supports and interventions to increase the overall successes their students.

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Appendix A

P.R.I.D.E Daily Point Sheet

Name: _____   Date: _____

Personal Goal:_____

Students will:	*Commitment to Quality:* **Follow Directions**	*Gratitude* **Be Respectful**:	*Honor & Integrity:* **Commit to Appropriate Language**	*Contribution:* **Demonstrate on task behavior**	*Perseverance:* **Exercise Personal Goal**	Total Points	Staff Initials
7:45-8:30 Arrival/Breakfast Morning Circle	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2		

8:30-9:35 () Resources () Classroom	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1		
9:35-10:35 () Resources () Classroom	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1		
10:35-11:45 () Resources () Classroom	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1		
11:45- 12:30 LUNCH	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1		
12:30-1:30 () Resources () Classroom	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1		
1:30-2:30 () Resources () Classroom	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1		
Closing Circles 2:30-3:00 Dismissal	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1	0 2	1		

Students will receive from 0-2 points period based on student compliance

Point Total for the Day (80) _____

Point Levels

Arrival/Bus Points (5) _____   P 00- 69%

Dismissal/Bus Points (5) _____   R
70-79%

Signed Point Sheet/HW (10) _____   I 80-89%

Grand Total (max 100pts) _____   D
90-94%

E 95-100%

Appendix B

Anecdotal Record Form

Social / Emotional / Behavioral Observations

Student: _____

Date	Category	Observations	Next Steps/Goals
	❑ Social ❑ Emotional ❑ Behavioral		

Date	Category	Observations	Next Steps/Goals
	❑ Social ❑ Emotional ❑ Behavioral		

Date	Category	Observations	Next Steps/Goals
	❑ Social ❑ Emotional ❑ Behavioral		

Date	Category	Observations	Next Steps/Goals
	❑ Social ❑ Emotional ❑ Behavioral		

Date	Category	Observations	Next Steps/Goals
	❑ Social ❑ Emotional ❑ Behavioral		