

# FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

**CLASSROOM PLANNING  
FOR THE  
EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED**

## A SYNTHESIS OF CLASSROOM SCHEDULING TECHNIQUES FOR EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN

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It is imperative that educators continue to develop procedures which can be used in special classrooms to bring about successful experiences for emotionally disturbed children. Rather than aperiodic happenings these experiences should be the result of systematic educational planning so that the frequency of success is maximized. There is evidence that "healthy positive achievement reduces anxiety . . . satisfaction from experiencing growth can only arise when there is opportunity to achieve on some task" (Herzberg & Hamlin, 1963). Disturbed children engaged in school-oriented tasks producing positive growth would reflect these experiences in their emotional behavior.

Haring and Phillips (1962) developed a structured interference approach to the education of emotionally disturbed children and subsequently reported the efficacy of this model in special classrooms located in a public school. Education was conceived to be a treatment tool, and healthy emotions were considered as the by-products of successful academic achievements. The Structured Approach was achieved in the classroom environment through the consistent application of specific procedures which enabled the teacher to implement the paramount concept, the clarification of the relationship between behavior and its consequences. The procedures have been further developed, expanded, and embellished by Whelan and Haring (1966) and Gallagher (1968).

This paper is designed to explain and elaborate the facets in the scheduling procedure. It is believed that these techniques will assist teachers in realizing their maximum potential. It will also facilitate the management of the difficult situations which are encountered in the process of changing disturbed children's behavior.

Scheduling provides the framework to expedite the teacher's interference with the debilitating effects of the students' repeated classroom failures. A sequential classroom activity program is carefully planned for each child, which allows him many opportunities for appropriate behaviors and personal success. The student is assisted in recognizing in advance the consequences, pleasant or unpleasant, of his behaviors. That is, he understands the relevancy of his actions. Limits and

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expectations are established; therefore uncertainty is reduced. The latter appears important since disturbed children have an infinite capacity for uncertainty, thereby rendering themselves ineffective in meeting everyday demands.

The scheduling procedure is subdivided into two major schedules, the schedule for the full academic program and the daily schedule for each student. To understand the scheduling procedure, guidelines applicable to groups or individuals are provided. The guidelines represent a hierarchy of phases indicating the continuum through which the student will progress. Though implementations may vary for each child, the guidelines are established to achieve a common goal. It is possible that an entire special classroom group would function at the same point on a guideline continuum; however, individual performances at that point are dependent on individual schedules. For example, one guideline initially suggests short work periods which can be extended to long work periods. Assume the students require short work periods, that is, they can perform independently for five minutes. Susan may work on a paper and pencil activity, Douglas will work on a coloring paper, while Harry reads aloud to the teacher. Each child has five minutes of work which follows the same phase of the guideline—short work period—however, the work is individually planned.

There is no limit to the creativeness by which the teacher implements a guideline. Ingenuity, knowledge of curriculum materials, and a sensitivity to children

are the most desirable variables. How can there be creativity in so small a task as a five-minute coloring activity? Was the coloring picture detailed or simple? What shape crayons were used? Were there any aids provided for the child's initial coloring attempt? What success level was established? A cursory glance at the variables which were considered will reveal the teacher's ingenuity. Since the teacher knew that the child had extreme difficulty in coloring within lines, loved airplanes and other flying objects, and that cartoons were a favorite pastime, she provided a simple picture of a Mikey Mouse balloon, heavily outlined with a black pen. The standard size crayons replaced the non-roll primary crayons. A visitor walking into the classroom scarcely noticed the student's task, but the teacher knew that the student's individual work had been programmed and the child knew that he was successful during a five-minute period. There will be many more of those five-minute periods which will gradually progress into a five-hour school day.

Initially the scheduling procedure requires an inordinate amount of the teacher's time; however, once the systematic format of guidelines is understood the procedures become routine and general planning time is reduced. It is the individualization of every student's schedule which will consume time. Disturbed children must be recipients of systematic planning so their work is accomplished in an organized program toward the final goal of returning to the mainstream activities of their peer group.

The major guidelines are based on the child's progression from the initial days of special classroom placement to the final days. This progression could occur in one academic year; it varies, however, as some children require many years of special help while others advance at a faster rate. Furthermore, not all children begin at the same phase of the guideline continuum. For purposes of discussion in this paper, assume a student is enrolled in his first days of special classroom program, and that he exhibits many deviant behaviors in academic and social areas. With this assumption in mind the schedule guidelines can be presented in their entirety. The final goal is the child's return to full-time enrollment in a regular classroom with skills necessary to compete successfully with peers.

The student's level of instruction is the determinant for placement in the guideline phases. Within every child there is a diversification of skills; that is, in one

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academic subject area the child will be on one point of the continuum and for another subject he will be at a different point. It is this diversity which makes teaching a creative adventure accompanied by hours of frustration!

### MAJOR SCHEDULE GUIDELINES

Schedules for the initial days will differ markedly from the schedules existing during the terminal days of a special classroom's academic program. The guideline statements indicate the ideal variables which comprise the beginning days of a schedule, and the variables comprising the final days of the program. Discussion focuses upon the student's progression through the continuum of scheduled activities.

#### GUIDELINE ONE

##### *INSTRUCTION DIRECTED TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS IS PREPARED FOR GROUPS OF STUDENTS.*

Since every student presents a myriad of responses different from his peers, the teacher presents materials and instructs the students on an individual basis. Furthermore, each student's abilities vary within academic subjects and between subjects. A brief profile is presented to illustrate this point. Eight-year-old children usually perform at the third grade level; however, one eight-year-old boy had the following skills: (a) his oral reading was on grade level; (b) comprehension was weak; (c) in arithmetic he performed on first semester, second-grade level; (d) he struggled with cursive writing. It is possible that two students are at the fourth grade reading level and use the same curriculum materials. However, one is a rapid reader but will not use picture clues if illustrations include the faces of people. The other fourth grader reads slowly and methodically. To present the same lesson simultaneously and expect the same behaviors is anathema, for neither child has built a backlog of success whereby he can assume some tolerance for the other's individuality.

When disturbed children first enter a special classroom they should receive orientation instruction, support for their feelings of anxiety, understanding for feelings of hostility, and an explanation of the existing classroom

structure. The enrolled members of the class should also present their needs. Once the teacher has projected a day's work for each student an important aspect of scheduling is before her, that is, the division of her time. She can divide her plan book into areas for each student's work activities, indicating where her skills are needed. One child may be scheduled to receive her attention for the instruction preceding the completion of a task, another student will prepare for a spelling exercise, while another student has a task which requires no adult supervision. The teacher's day is thus scheduled and no two days are exactly alike regarding the distribution of her time.

Obviously the teacher does not schedule for a week or month in advance. She plans day by day for each child and bases each succeeding program on the current day's performance. Perhaps a child will encounter unexpected difficulty when presented with the reverse integers in the multiplication process. The lesson's follow-up independent activity will be postponed until the child gains understanding of the mathematical process. The teacher's instruction may again be scheduled for the following day.

During the initial days events which can interrupt the schedules, such as classroom visitors, should be avoided until the students know their expectations and exhibit appropriate responses. However there are times when a day's routine, carefully planned, is suddenly interrupted by a student's temper outburst, followed by another student's crying, while the teacher is helping a child learn to write his name. When these events occur the behaviors must be managed and the schedule resumed.

Whenever the teacher observes an opportunity for two students to engage in an activity she groups them. Perhaps the two students can respond to a chalkboard writing lesson and then proceed individually on their seat work lesson. Perhaps two students can work at opposite ends of a large work table when they have an art project to complete. As different combinations of grouping occur, the network enlarges and the grouping process is expanded to involve more students. Group instruction for students performing at the same grade level becomes possible, and total group instruction for activities such as art, educational games, music, morning exercises, social studies, and science can be achieved. During the final phase the schedule and routine closely resemble a regular elementary classroom.

**GUIDELINE TWO*****INDIVIDUAL WORK AREAS ARE ARRANGED INTO GROUP WORK AREAS***

An integral feature of the individual program concept is an individual work area. The physical arrangement includes the student's own desk and chair located in a special area which may or may not be partitioned from the remaining individual work areas. These work stations are frequently referred to as *offices*. Various methods used to partition work areas include study carrels, portable screens, Masonite boards attached to three sides of the desk, or space itself. The student is physically oriented to individual work activities and individual instruction. The arrangement is designed to enhance the one-to-one pupil-teacher relationship. For some students the reduction of visual stimuli resulting from the arrangement is beneficial. If necessary, ear phones or ear plugs can be used to reduce audio stimuli. There have been classrooms where the physical arrangement has been abused. In these instances the students feel that they are being punished, and consequently view themselves as outcasts. Conversely many classrooms have placed high priority on individuality and the student views the physical arrangement as an aid to help him over some big academic hurdles. When each student has his own work area, it is a physical reminder that individuality reigns, and that individual activities have been planned for him.

The student completes all his academic work in the office; however, he must have a legitimate reason for moving around the room. One reason for moving could be the requirement that completed tasks are placed on the teacher's desk. Another successfully employed technique has been the utilization of "in" and "out" boxes such as two-tier file trays. One tray contains worksheets and books to be used, and the other is used for the completed assignments. The file trays are located near the office but far enough away for the child to have to leave his seat in order to reach them. The file trays could be placed on a work counter, designated table, or book shelf so that the students walk to and from the trays. Remember that the student needs his own work space but he also requires legitimate reasons for moving. The execution of this aspect rests in the resourcefulness of the teacher.

The teacher watches for the opportunity to place students in close proximity for performance of school

tasks. Perhaps two students can have their desks located adjacent to each other for a spelling test, or four students can convene at the large table if one is seated at either end of the table and the remaining two are seated across from each other. Essentially they are seated together at one table, but they have their own work areas. Eventually the individual work areas are disbanded and the grouping of physical properties and/or students is established.

**GUIDELINE THREE*****RIGID CLASS PERIODS EXTEND TO FLEXIBLE PERIODS FOR WORK ACTIVITIES***

Initially every minute of the child's classroom time is scheduled and no deviations occur. There is an established routine for each child. The student walks into the classroom and has a place for his wraps. If he has a written note he knows where to place it on the teacher's desk. If he has brought paraphernalia there is a designated place for the items. He then seats himself at his desk and begins the day's activities. Should reading be the first activity, followed by English, then this order is maintained. If he uses a hard lead pencil with no eraser then it is his writing tool. The child is left with no doubt that he has work to do and that the tasks are planned for him. There is no doubt as to whether a daily activity will come in the morning or afternoon. Once the student becomes familiar with his schedule he usually assumes a small amount of cockiness [independence] because he knows the scoop [limits and expectations]! The behavior pattern is similar to a young child's actions when a parent reads a favorite story and omits a page or phrase. The child tells the parent "You forgot to say. . ."

The initial rigid work periods will be replaced with flexible class periods. The teacher is alert to an initiation of a student's shift into a routine where changes can be introduced. One example of a move away from the rigid period would be the simple substitution of a different kind of stimuli for the same lesson. The student who is always presented with a single sheet of arithmetic problems may be given the lesson, from a chalkboard, from a textbook, or verbally. An English period could be omitted and replaced by an extended reading lesson. Writing lessons will not be presented from the regular handwriting series but they will develop from teacher-



made materials. A special event such as a school assembly or a birthday party will be part of the day's activities. Thus the student adapts to flexibility in the curriculum.

#### **GUIDELINE FOUR**

##### ***TEACHER-PLANNED ACTIVITIES GRADUALLY INCLUDE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING***

The teacher imposes the structure concept as a model for the student's imitation. She presents the behavioral possibilities, their consequences, and the means of achieving them. Her role is the modification of the student's behavior, and it is important that she guides the student's talents along enrichment avenues and interferes with inappropriate behavior, for they cannot go unnoticed. At the same time the student should receive encouragement in his own divergence; however, he may not understand how much divergence is appropriate within our social code. Therefore the teacher directs the various avenues for divergence while providing the avenue for conformity.

During the initial days of a program some children will require a minute plan of direction, as exemplified by a nine-year-old girl's actions. She had completed a series of short work periods comprising an hour of work and had earned fifteen minutes of free time which was conducted in the play area of a large classroom. She selected a large sheet of drawing paper and a box of crayons. During the entire free period she repeatedly fondled each crayon. When she brought one crayon close to the paper she replaced it with another color. When her fifteen minutes were over she was upset. She protested that she didn't have her free time because she had not colored! She was required to return to her program; however, that evening the teacher developed a plan. When the student next earned her fifteen minutes of free time and again decided to color, the teacher directed her to color with the red crayon. The child went to the play area, placed her drawing paper on the floor, and executed a picture in red. When free time was over she proudly displayed her picture. From this point forward she was directed to use one color, red; then two colors, red and blue. This progressive use of additional colors continued until eight colors had been added. The student's ability to choose from a small assortment of

colors grew until she was able to make her own selection from a box of twenty-four crayons, and proceed with her picture-making. The pupil had to learn how to make choices. In this case the teacher provided heavy direction which gradually diminished in an incremental series for a seemingly simple task, the selection of colors for free picture drawing.

The techniques of teacher-imposed directions can be carried to minuscule levels if the child needs them; however, other children may be at the point of the continuum where they are participating in the planning of activities. Initially the student is required to learn one way. It is linear growth. Then branching occurs and the student is slowly able to perceive choices and select a course of action with its ensuing consequences. He can gradually be introduced into the planning of his activities. The child's initial participation can be as simple as his selection of the records which are played for the noon hour activities or the selection of the physical activity for the morning exercises. Perhaps his daily assignments are teacher-made, but he selects the order in which he will complete them. Or he may even plan his next day's work contingent upon the teacher's approval. Once the students engage in an operable schedule, they have a framework for an efficient and rewarding work routine. Later they develop their own routine with its own flourishes.

#### **GUIDELINE FIVE**

##### ***TEACHER'S SUPERVISION OF ALL ACTIVITIES IS REPLACED AT TIMES BY THE STUDENT'S SELF-SUPERVISION***

The teacher must often act as the cohesive element in a diverse, often fragmented atmosphere which exists with a group of disturbed children. Her time is consumed with observations of behaviors for clues in scheduling changes, umpiring minor incidents, intervening when negative contagion develops, and support when anxiety arises. Some behaviors occur frequently, and if not interfered with can be catastrophic for the children. She must be available at all times for such classroom situations. She is literally on call! This of course places heavy demand upon the teacher, but the aforementioned needs are not omnipresent. The children will develop their own controls, abilities, and solutions, and proceed with a schedule when an adult figure is

not present. Initially a student's need may be such that a teacher's presence in the form of physical contact is needed. Gradually the teacher's close proximity is extended to wider distances. She will engage in other classroom activities, showing in a small way that she is not necessary at all times. On occasion she may step out of the classroom for a brief time. These intervals are widened as the student gains in independence and self-direction. The student will learn to monitor his own behavior regardless of the presence of his teacher or peers.

#### GUIDELINE SIX

##### *STUDENTS ARE PHASED INTO A CLASSROOM AND GRADUALLY PHASED OUT*

The phase-in technique will give a teacher the time necessary to individually plan for each student, move him along the road of independence, and give him time to determine the variables in his new surrounding. If a new group of students is initiated to a classroom it is highly recommended that the students be enrolled in a successive order. One student is enrolled. The teacher observes the student and determines the variables of his behaviors for individual planning. Once the child responds to his program a second child is introduced to the classroom scene. Again the same planning is required. The teacher is provided with the time necessary to prepare in a maximum way for each new student because she can spend more time with the new student if a routine has been established for the enrolled students.

Phasing-out is a process by which the child is gradually introduced into the mainstream of regular classroom activities. The teacher observes the child and determines when he is able to participate for a given length of time in a regular classroom. Usually her selection is based on the student's demonstration of a skill indicating a level where he is able to compete successfully with a percentage of the regular students. Science may be the ideal subject for one student's participation, whereas with another student science may never be an area of interest let alone a skill. There is no measuring stick relevant to the month or day when a child is phased out of a special classroom. As soon as the child reaches grade level on any skill and achieves a level where he can accept some failure, the phasing out process should

begin. The student's behavior will provide the information necessary for the teacher's decision to integrate the student in his regular classroom.

#### GUIDELINE SEVEN

##### *EXTRINSIC REINFORCERS ARE FORERUNNERS TO NATURAL REINFORCERS*

Emotionally disturbed children are removed from their natural classroom setting and placed in a new environment for many reasons, which include their inability to understand, cope with, or receive the benefits of natural consequences, such as smiles from the teacher, peers' approval, report card grades, or positive social comments. For reasons unknown, these types of consequences [reinforcers] either lost or never had influence in bringing about desirable changes in the student. Therefore extrinsic consequences are used to reinforce and motivate the student toward the desired academic and social behaviors. Sometimes very powerful consequences—for example, money or a holiday from school—are used. *HOWEVER*, the use of intrinsic reinforcers is a means of achieving the use of natural reinforcers existing in public schools. Extrinsic consequences can set into motion the desired responses so often missing from the child's repertoire. Once the desired behaviors are acquired, a shift of reinforcers along the continuum to natural reinforcers is begun.

An example from a special classroom situation illustrates how such a change was accomplished. Six young, emotionally disturbed children received frequent reinforcement during their first hour of scheduled short work periods. If one hour of work was completed the children also received orange juice and vanilla wafers. Initially the children ate vigorously and talked simultaneously. As the school months elapsed their social graces improved. The children ate smaller portions of the snack and monitored their own conversations. Meanwhile they had requested and were learning how to serve the cookies and pour the orange juice. Several months later all the students were participating very appropriately in conversation and generally refusing the food. The extrinsic consequence, food, gradually shifted into a very natural consequence, the enjoyment of conversation with friends.

The use of extrinsic consequences will vary within and between children. One student may need extrinsic




consequences for eighty percent of his work while another student responds to extrinsic consequences twenty percent of the time. To use extrinsic reinforcers for all work is a cardinal error. To begin a child on extrinsic consequences when careful observation would have indicated that this student was reinforced by peer approval is to regress a child to an earlier phase of the continuum. Selection, amount, and application of extrinsic and natural reinforcers will be made by the teacher based on her observations of the children. Effective use of extrinsic consequences depends also on the cooperation of parents and administrative personnel.

#### GUIDELINE EIGHT

##### *REINFORCERS PRESENTED ON A ONE-TO-ONE RATIO ARE FOLLOWED BY AN INTERMITTENT SCHEDULE OF REINFORCEMENT*

During the initial stages of the academic program when many new behaviors are acquired, reinforcement should be given on a one-to-one ratio: each response receives a consequence. The technique is designed to give the student a backlog of success by accenting the positive. This measure will be conveyed repeatedly to encourage the student into a success pattern. Heretofore he has been a failure with school, society, and himself, but he will slowly acquire competence and security in his growing abilities. He may not be able to continue unless he knows that he is progressing and receives something meaningful for his work. Perhaps there had been many past experiences when he completed an entire paper making a consistent error which was not detected. Reinforce every correct problem. If reinforcement is presented for each problem the margin of error is reduced. Use a one-to-one ratio until the student achieves to a level where a change to an intermittent schedule is indicated, that is, the child works a pre-selected number of responses before the reinforcers become available. For example a student may receive reinforcement for each sheet of completed problems, not every problem, or for each story, not each word, he reads. Finally a success pattern is established and the child is reinforced when larger amounts of work are completed.

How are the papers usually graded? The errors are frequently checked (✓) to indicate incorrect responses. Since errors receive attention the negative aspect of the

work is emphasized. If there are a number of errors the school task can be an excruciating and debilitating experience. What if the procedure were reversed and all the right responses were graded? The paper would be a series of correct marks and the positive responses accentuated. "Accent the positive" is a theme which should prevail in the classroom. For some emotionally disturbed children this theme may need to be exaggerated. If necessary a heavily outlined "C" mark could be placed by the right responses and a small "✓" placed by the wrong responses, thereby accenting the positive. A teacher could also stand by the student and say "Great," "Good," or "O.K." as she checks the paper. This is especially helpful with students who are described as "defeated" children. Smiling Sams  can be substituted for C marks on the papers of young children.

For some students a correct mark is not reinforcing; in other words they "could care less." The mark only serves as feedback, knowledge of results. It is essential to discern whether feedback is reinforcing during the many observations of the student's responses. If feedback is not reinforcing, select an appropriate reinforcer to accompany the marking system and the positive will be accented.

#### GUIDELINE NINE

##### *IMMEDIATE PRESENTATION OF REINFORCERS IS SHIFTED TO LONG-RANGE PRESENTATION OF REINFORCERS*

The immediate presentation of reinforcers must accompany the one-to-one ratio during the beginning days of a student's enrollment in a special classroom. The importance of immediate reinforcement cannot be overestimated. An example of a classroom situation will illustrate the necessity to avoid a time lapse in the presentation of reinforcers. A student working on a reading task may shoot a paper wad while the teacher momentarily turns to another student. Following the completion of the task, the student receives reinforcement for the correct responses. To a child who cannot perceive the relationship between behavior and its consequences, the other behavior, shooting a paper wad, was also reinforced. To avoid reinforcing other behaviors, immediate reinforcement is imperative. The immediate

presentation of all reinforcers is necessary until the disturbed student progresses through a systematic delay of reinforcers and is able to respond to a reinforcer presented at the end of longer time intervals. In many regular classrooms peer approval and teacher's positive comments are sporadic. Graded papers are returned at the end of the day, the following day, or the end of the week. Report cards are distributed every six or nine weeks. Selected student papers are occasionally displayed on a bulletin board. Consequently the adjustment to a delayed reinforcer should be accomplished before the student is fully integrated into the regular classroom.

#### GUIDELINE TEN

#### *INITIALLY STUDENTS HAVE A FULL-TIME, SPECIAL CLASSROOM SCHEDULE, AND PROGRESS TO COMPLETE INTEGRATION IN REGULAR CLASSROOMS*

Many disturbed children require tutorial type intervention; therefore, they will spend all their time in a special classroom. The teacher then has the opportunity to closely observe the child, ascertain his instructional level for all academic work, select curriculum materials, and discover appropriate reinforcers. It follows, then, that the teacher knows more about the child than anyone else does. She is in a vantage point to disseminate information, especially when the child is phased into a regular classroom. Occasionally a new student can be phased into an activity in a regular classroom shortly after his orientation to the special classroom. Should this occur, immediate participation in a regular classroom is in order. The goal, of course, is to have the student completely integrated in a regular classroom.

#### INDIVIDUAL SCHEDULE GUIDELINES

As an aid in affecting a workable program schedule for each individual student the following techniques are suggested:

1. *A form should be designed on which the daily schedule is printed.* The format will depend on the children's level of understanding. A ditto schedule listing subject headings and amount of work time can be prepared in advance. The sections are then completed as

they pertain to each student. The format may be arranged by subjects or time blocks. For example:

Name	Date
Reading	
Arithmetic	
Spelling	
English	
Writing	

Name	Date
9:00-10:00	
10:00-11:00	
11:00-12:00	
Lunch	
1:00- 2:00	
2:00 2:30	

Frequently teachers save the individual schedule sheets because they represent an excellent record of the child's progress and grades. Middle and upper grade students can have a daily schedule placed on their desk, or placed on a clipboard attached to a hook on the desk. Primary children's individual work sheets can be numbered with a felt pen according to the order in which they are to be completed, then placed in manila folders for the day's work. Slips of paper can be numbered if hardback books are used. Whatever the selected format, each child has a daily schedule of his activities. He knows what is expected of him and in what order. He may not always like the work which is to be completed but he knows what is planned. There is little room for argument since the schedule is a black-and-white arrangement. Inherent in his schedule is careful teacher planning, with work geared to the child's current level of ability and the amount of teacher assistance necessary in guiding him to follow through the work plan.

2. *The Premack principle can be used with regularity.* That is, of any two responses the one which is more likely to occur is the preferred response, referred to as the *high probability behavior*. It can reinforce the less frequent response, the *low probability behavior*. If, of two academic subjects, reading is preferred to mathematics, then reading, the high probability behavior, is scheduled after mathematics. The child's preferred and less-preferred activities are alternately scheduled. If a child has no preferred activities, then engineer a favorite non-academic activity such as five minutes of free time to follow a low probability behavior. The Premack principle has been used in schools for years, as evidenced by



recess following a certain amount of work time.

3. *Each day's work must culminate at the end of the day.* The child needs the opportunity to begin each day with a "fresh slate." This becomes evident when a child verbalizes after a difficult day, "Well, tomorrow I can start all over again." This technique appears to reduce anxiety in children as they will not have a twenty-four hour waiting period to worry about the completed day's activities. They know where they stand before they leave their classroom.

4. *Plan ahead and anticipate the student's needs.* If the students have access to art supplies be sure that these materials are available in a designated location. If the room has no wash sink and several students are avid tempera painters, place a bucket of water in the room. A bucket of water and rags are also handy for minor spills. There are many preventive kinds of measures that a teacher considers to ease the anxiety of the child and thus clear the way for appropriate responses.

5. *Program short assignments.* Some children become overwhelmed by a large amount of work which must be completed. Or they become overwhelmed by the physical appearance of a textbook because it looks like "so much" even though only a small portion of it is the day's assignment. A number of classroom ideas have been used to distribute the work load. All work materials are removed from the child's desk and located in another part of the room. The child picks up only one assignment at a time as listed on the daily schedule. If the in and out file trays are used, the work to be completed is placed on the lower tray while the completed work is placed on the top tray. The student is able to have greater visibility of what he has finished rather than what is required for completion. Worksheets are torn from consumable workbooks so the appearance of a full workbook is not defeating. Worksheets can be subdivided into sections and presented one at a time to the student. One teacher cut each arithmetic worksheet into individual problems until the child was capable of completing single rows of problems, then half pages, and eventually the whole page. Some teachers omit hardback texts from the curriculum and present materials in small softback books. Small amounts of work build into higher stacks, and the student is often pleased "seeing" how much work he has completed. In many cases the

student is working as much or more than regular classroom students.

6. *Establish expectations in advance and do not introduce an unknown event unexpectedly.* If the daily routine is to be interrupted by a fire drill, do not give the information to the students too far in advance; however, do give the information in time to avoid surprise. Since disturbed children are adept in exhibiting new unacceptable behaviors, a teacher can find herself in an endless match of wits if she punishes every new inappropriate response before the consequences are established in advance. When the student responds unacceptably—for example, he shouts out an obscene word—do not punish him immediately, but offer him a plan. Briefly explain the inappropriateness of the behavior, tell him the reinforcement if the behavior is repeated, and restate the existence of pleasant reinforcers which are available when he is engaged in appropriate activities. The student is presented with a choice of action—repeat or omit the behavior. If the inappropriate behavior occurs a second time, it is essential that the teacher follow through with the aforementioned reinforcer. Make sure the consequence is one which can be presented. "I'll wash your mouth out with soap" is an empty consequence if it is not administered. These children have come in contact with so many inconsistencies, empty threats, and partially fulfilled promises that they continue testing until they come in contact with solidarity. It will take time for them to understand a solid foundation when they find it.

7. *No additional work is given for completed work.* Should a child complete work ahead of schedule then provide something pleasant for him to do. Do not have him complete another assignment. If you do so, you are essentially saying, "If you have completed all your work, you will be given more work." The child will begin to gauge his work accordingly and move at a slower pace, or he will soon be discouraged and the completion of work will no longer be maintained.

### SUMMARY

Schedule guidelines have been suggested which can be implemented in special classrooms. Formulate a schedule which can be carried out effectively and consistently. Each teacher must be comfortable with her

planned schedule. Be assured that every child will spend some portion of his time testing the schedule. It is up to the teacher to maintain the schedule and make the decisions until the student is ready to assume the responsibility. At first the scheduling procedure requires much time; however, as a teacher becomes familiar with the students and their problems, the planning time is reduced. The rewards for both student and teacher in an organized Structured classroom cannot be overestimated.

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## RESOURCE MATERIALS

#### RESEARCH PRESS

This is a small publisher close to its authors attempting to publish books and materials for children who have behavioral deficits. Publications are in behavior modification, special education, and guidance.

Teachers and administrators interested in child behavior problems, student motivation, psychotherapy, and reading readiness will want to obtain a catalog. Several new publications are planned next year.

You can receive a copy of their latest catalog by writing the Research Press, P.O. Box 2459, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820.

#### MAFEX ASSOCIATES, INC.

A clear understanding of the needs of exceptional children and their teachers has characterized the work of this company, in the business of developing curriculum materials for the past eight years. All materials have been developed by teachers and tested in the classroom, and are of great help in the education of the complete range of the retarded, specific learning disabilities, rehabilitation, adult basic education, and others with learning problems.

For a copy of their latest catalogue write: Mafex Associates, 111 Barron Avenue, Johnstown, Pa. 15906.

#### LOS ANGELES COUNTY SCHOOLS

*Counseling Parents of Mentally Retarded Children and Youth* is the title of a publication recently prepared by the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Office, Division of Special Education. Financed by a Title VI A Federal Grant, this project provided for a series of ten lectures to be presented to parents of mentally retarded children and youth. Topics were subjects of vital concern to the parents, and the lectures were designed to assist them in increasing their knowledge about mental retardation, and improving their understanding and acceptance of their retarded child. The following areas were covered:

- Medical and Health
- The Community and the Retarded
- Intellectual Abilities
- Education
- Parent, Child, Family Relationships
- Psychiatric and Psychological Adjustments of Parent and Child
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Recreation
- Communication
- Legal and Social Security

At the end of each lecture time was allowed for questions and answers. The response to the entire series was highly enthusiastic, and there was no doubt that its purpose had been achieved.

This publication contains summaries of each lecture along with a large appendix which offers supportive materials and references. Its purpose is to help parents, teachers, and school administrators as well as the general public acquire a broader knowledge and understanding



of mental retardation and to understand the kinds of questions of concern to parents of mentally retarded children and youth.

Copies are available at \$1.00 each through:  
Los Angeles County Superintendent  
of Schools Office  
Division of Special Education  
155 West Washington Blvd.  
Los Angeles, California 90015

#### EMBASSIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Frequently overlooked, but excellent sources of social studies materials, are the many embassies, consulates, missions, and information bureaus established in the United States by foreign governments. The materials made available by them are particularly useful as supplements to study units. While these materials may have minimal application to instruction programs for retarded children, teachers responsible for developing interest centers or social studies units for disturbed children will find them of considerable value.

The Australian Consulate-General provides a plethora of materials featuring several full-color illustrated brochures covering the country's topography, science, government, culture, education and economy. In addition, both a series of reference papers and a series of photographic essays on Australia are offered. Of singular value due to its practical applicability in the elementary classroom is a coloring book presenting the birds and animals indigenous to Australia along with pertinent information written in verse. A catalog of 16 mm films for rent or purchase, which is classified by subject area, can also be requested.

A comparable selection of materials may be secured from Israel Information Services. In addition to the 192-page, 1969 edition of *Facts About Israel* and a large number of smaller information pamphlets, there are available such relatively unique items as a copy of the Israeli Declaration of Independence and the musical notation for the Israeli National Anthem.

Under the auspices of the Venezuelan Embassy, a published quarterly entitled *Venezuela Up-to-Date*, reporting current business, industrial, economic and cultural developments in Venezuela, is supplied without charge. Included with the additional supplementary materials are black and white and colored maps.

The above examples are representative of the mailings typically obtainable as a public service from these inter-

national agencies. Their highly visually oriented nature makes these materials particularly amenable to use with children exhibiting problems in attention span, auditory memory, or difficulties in reading. A complete address listing of the information services and embassies in the United States of all United Nations members can be obtained by addressing correspondence to: United Nations, Public Inquiries Unit, New York, N. Y. 10017.

Along these same lines, teachers should be aware of similar materials distributed without cost by the 50 state Chambers of Commerce. Further, particular interest in any city for local study units may be developed or supplemented by requesting relevant aids from your hometown Chamber of Commerce. Local units also provide access to the directory listing of all Chambers of Commerce throughout the United States.

## ISSUES & TRENDS

#### NEW IRS RULING

A significant new ruling of the Internal Revenue Service will be of greatest interest to parents of exceptional children.

The IRS has ruled that the cost of educating a child with learning disabilities may be considered a tax-deductible medical expense. If a child meets the requirements (this is to be determined by a physician), his parents may be able to deduct for the cost of diagnostic examinations, special education program, tutoring, and books.

To ensure getting the proper interpretation of this ruling as it may apply to their child, it is recommended that parents discuss it with a lawyer.

The Council for Exceptional Children is holding a special conference on Instructional Technology in San Antonio, Texas, December 1-5, 1970. For further information write The Council for Exceptional Children, Jefferson Plaza, Suite 900; Arlington, Virginia 22202.

**FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN** back issues are available. Single copies 80¢, 2-9 copies 70¢, and 10 or more copies 50¢ each.

# CLASSROOM FORUM

Edited by Austin J. Connolly, University of Missouri

## PROBLEM 2:

*There is an emotionally disturbed girl in your elementary classroom who is having learning problems. She is nine. You feel the problem is the mother, and too much pressure on the child for good performance from home. All attempts to get the mother in for a conference have failed. There is some evidence that the child is attempting to manipulate the mother. Can this child be helped? How?*

The situation is not as bleak as it may initially appear. Evidently the parents, particularly the mother, are interested in and concerned about their girl's academic performance. This concern is good and can provide a common ground of mutual interest once it is effectively channeled. One can only speculate why a mother who is interested in her child's progress would avoid contact with the teacher and the school. It is likely that she feels frustration and embarrassment over the girl's performance, and may regard it as a negative reflection on herself. This frustration may be coupled with a growing sense of resentment, particularly if the child is intimating that her problems stem from faulty instruction. The mother's feelings certainly lessen the possibility of success from an open confrontation such as a parent conference. The teacher is more likely to gain parental confidence and support through indirect approaches spread across a period of time. The obvious vehicle for winning parental support is a happy and successful student.

Fortunately, this child is situated in a special education class where she should be able to receive instruction geared to her individual needs. Her greatest need at the present time is success. Thus the difficulty of material must be carefully controlled so that she gains positive reinforcement. The difficulty of material can be slowly increased as the child's confidence grows.

When the child begins demonstrating success on school work, send the more interesting and challenging ma-

terial home for the parents to see. This will likely gain parental approval in time. Later the teacher may develop a folder of school work which depicts the child's areas of strength and weakness. This folder should be mailed home with an accompanying letter which explains how the child is doing, areas of current curricular emphasis, and a brief outline of specific short-range and long-range instructional goals for their child. This letter should close with a very positive and tactful indication of the teacher's interest in their child and her availability for conferences upon the request of parents. She should not detail past attempts at earning their support. She must win their support, not demand it.

## PROBLEM 4:

*An intermediate-level child is demonstrating a common problem in arithmetic computation. Here is a brief sample of his work:*

$$\begin{array}{r}
 5 \quad 7 \quad 12 \quad 13 \quad 36 \quad 241 \\
 +4 \quad +8 \quad +7 \quad +18 \quad +81 \quad +392 \\
 \hline
 9 \quad 15 \quad 19 \quad 211 \quad 18 \quad 534 \\
 \\
 7 \quad 19 \quad 362 \quad 23 \quad 42 \quad 302 \\
 -2 \quad -8 \quad -271 \quad \times 2 \quad \times 3 \quad \times 4 \\
 \hline
 5 \quad 11 \quad 130 \quad 46 \quad 27 \quad 218
 \end{array}$$

*This child is consistently making a methodological error that causes him to miss certain problems. This methodological error was evidenced by nearly 20% of the EMR high school students tested in a recent mathematics study. What is the error and how might a teacher help this child?*

All readers are invited to send their solution and tell how they would handle Problem 4. The December 1970 issue will summarize contributions by readers. *Focus on Exceptional Children* will award complimentary subscriptions each month for the best solution. Send your response to the Editorial Offices, *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 6635 East Villanova Place, Denver, Colorado 80222.