

TEACHING STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS:

FACTS, Behaviors, Modifications, and
Accommodations

Presented by:
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And Viki Wilson

The logo for Sage Alliance Schools features the word "Sage" in blue, a yellow star, and the word "Alliance" in blue. Below this, the word "Schools" is written in a smaller, yellow font. A yellow horizontal line is positioned under the "Sage" and "Alliance" text.

About us



Jennifer Kummer

- High School English teacher (11 years)
- B.A. Literature from Ramapo College
 - *Teacher Education Program*
- M.Ed. School Counseling from William Paterson University
- TSD Certificate from William Paterson University
- Has a cat named Luna and likes to hike

Viki Willson

- High School Principal
- Retired Special Services Director
- BA Psychology from Lock Haven University
- MA Educational Psychology from Montclair State University
- MA Educational Leadership
- Certified School Psychologist
- Has a dog named Buster and a special needs cat named Bella

Part 1: Background

Emotional Regulation Impairment

- "Emotional regulation impairment" means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance due to:
 - *i. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;*
 - *ii. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;*
 - *iii. Inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances;*
 - *iv. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or*
 - *v. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.*

A bit of history

- In 2020 there were multiple changes in language to Special Education categories in NJ
- Emotional Disturbance □ Emotional Regulation Impairment
- Increase in classifications and referrals since 2020/Covid

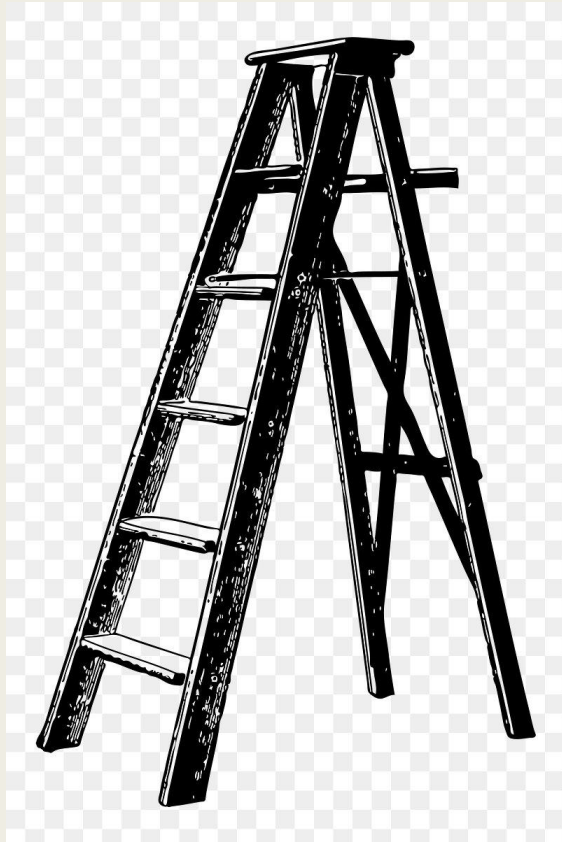
Other common IEP classifications

- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Could be secondary to a second diagnosis (i.e. ASD, ADHD, ODD)

Question

- How many of you have had students in your classroom with mental health disorders? (Eligible for special education services under the category of ERI or other)
- What are some strategies you use in your classroom to ensure success for these students?

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)



- Residential Treatment
- PHP
- Home Instruction
- Out of District Placement
- In District Full Time Special Education Setting
- In District Gen Ed with pull-out support
- In District Gen Ed with push-in support
- In District Gen Ed 100%

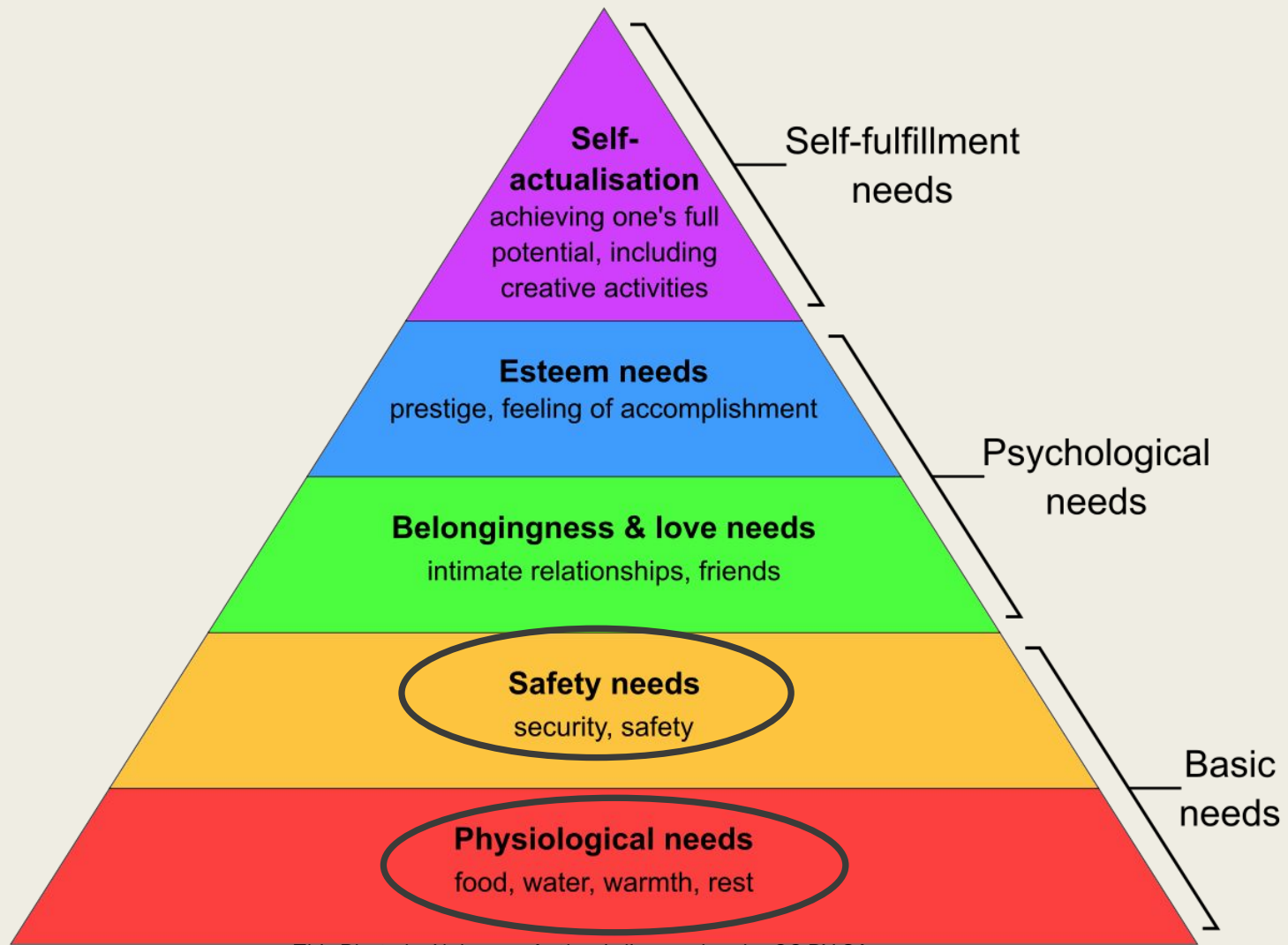
Part 2

Skills to help you through: FACTS

- Flexibility
- Accessible
- Compassion
- Teamwork
- Situation

Flexibility

- Classwork/homework
 - *Many students in this environment have a difficult time coming to school every day (school refusal). Assigning homework every night is not setting realistic goals/expectations, especially for younger grades or students who have not been in a school setting for a long period of time. Assign one homework assignment a week maximum to see results and be flexible with due dates.*
- Major assignments
 - *If you make a project due on a Tuesday and see that over 50% of your class is not ready to hand it in yet, be flexible and extend the due date by a day or two.*
- Meetings/therapy
 - *Be flexible in when students are taken for meetings and for therapy sessions, or other required sessions. Keep students responsible for the work they missed.*



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Examples of Universal Design for Learning

Representation

- sound, music, audio
- video
- closed captioning
- books & literature
- PowerPoint
- presentation, lecture
- graphs
- magazines

Expression

- drawing software
- whiteboards
- acting out/play
- typing, essay
- poster, arts & crafts
- drawings
- TURN TALK INTO TEXT
- Speech to text, assistive technologies

Engagement

- providing choices
- interactive games
- collaborating, teamwork
- Self-reflecting on choices
- music, audio, cues for routines
- real-life examples, taking pictures

Created by: Kelly Ransier
Montgomery County Public Schools

Address Learning Variability Across Neural Networks...

Affective Networks
The WHY of learning

Recognition Networks
The WHAT of learning

Strategic Networks
The HOW of learning

...by Informing the Design of Multiple, Flexible Opportunities to Learn

Engagement	Representation	Action and Expression
Provide options for self-regulation	Provide options for comprehension	Provide options for executive function
Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence	Provide options for mathematical expressions, and symbols	Provide options for expression and communication
Provide options for recruiting interest	Provide options for perception	Provide options for physical action

Accessible

- Learning needs to be accessible to all students
- Universal design for learning
- Google classroom or Schoology

Compassion

- Many students with ERI have experienced some form of trauma
- It is important to show these students compassion on a day-to-day basis
- Build a positive learning space so students are assured that they can succeed
- Provide positive affirmations for both small and big success
- Reminders:
 - *There are many forms of trauma and it can look different for everyone*

Teamwork

- Just like in any school, there are many people who make up the team working to make sure the students are successful
 - *Administration*
 - *Teachers*
 - *Therapists*
 - *LDTC*
 - *CST*
 - *Parents*
- Co-Teaching
 - *Team teaching, Parallel teaching, Station teaching, Alternative Teaching, One Teach/ One Assist, One Teach/One Observe*
 - *Helps to mitigate student behaviors*

Situation

- These students are not all coming from the same situation. They are in a special environment or need assistance because of specific circumstances. These can include but are not limited to:
 - *Bullying*
 - *School avoidance*
 - *Anxiety/depression*
 - *Problems at home (including abuse, neglect, or removal from home)*
 - *Ongoing medical issues*
- Trauma informed teaching
- Due to specific situations, students may be physically in the classroom but mentally may not be available for learning every day

Activity

- Everyone will receive a worksheet to complete
- On the worksheet there are four timed tasks to complete
- These four tasks may range in difficulty depending on your content area knowledge.
- Do your best on each timed task then we will discuss the tasks as a group.

Part 3: Behaviors, Modifications, and Accommodations

- Behaviors: stimulus-driven responses that occur specifically within the classroom or how students are acting in the classroom in response to what is going on or present around them
 - *can be a response to something in the classroom or outside of school*
- Modifications: are changes. These changes can be in the length of the assignment and/or in the complexity.
- Accommodations: alterations in the way tasks are presented that allow children with learning disabilities to complete the same assignments as other students

Common behaviors of students with mental health disorders

- School/work refusal
- Habitual lateness
- Incomplete assignments
- Easily distracted
- Frequent trips to the bathroom or nurse
- Low frustration tolerance
- Poor social skills
- Invading others' space
- What are some behaviors you have witnessed in your classroom?
- It is important to:
 - *Document behaviors of students in the classroom*
 - *Learn the cause or root of the behavior in order to decrease instances. School counselors, therapists, case managers, and the CST can help with this.*

Common Accommodations

- Allow verbal rather than written responses
- Provide oral as well as written instructions/directions
- Directions repeated, clarified or reworded
- Additional time to complete classroom tests/quizzes
- Allow use of a computer
- **Preferential and Flexible seating**
- **Provide short breaks when refocusing is needed**
- **Stress toys**
- Provide copy of notes
- Provide graphic organizers/study guides
- Additional time to complete classroom tests/quizzes, as needed
- Use of a calculator
- Provide clear, concise directions and concrete examples of class work and homework
- Allow tests to be given in an alternative environment
- Checklists for organization

Modifications

- Essays
 - *Change essay length*
 - *Allow students to complete a flow chart or graphic organizer*
- Tests
 - *Less choices for multiple choice*
 - *Less short answer responses*
- Projects
 - *Projects that meet various learning styles (i.e. writing, music, math, etc.)*
- Vocabulary
 - *Multiple choice questions instead of create your own sentence*
- In class work
 - *Shorter assignments, chunking assignments, longer time frame/different due date*

Modifications (cont.)

- Audio texts or digital texts
- Do not penalize for spelling errors
- Modify homework assignments
 - (modify content, modify amount, as appropriate)
- Break assignments into segments or shorter tasks
- Modify classwork in length or complexity
- Use alternative grade level material

Activity

- Each group will receive a scenario/student
- Your job is to brainstorm modifications and accommodations that could help that student succeed. There is a sheet of common modifications and accommodations, these are merely suggestions.

Scenario 1

- DUAL Eligibility Category: : ERI and SLD
- 16-year-old transgender male
- History of disassociation
- Has difficulty focusing, especially with long tasks, and writing.
- Diagnosis in anxiety, depression, reading comprehension, and math calculation.
- Can become easily frustrated.
- FSIQ: 97
- Strengths: verbal reasoning, creativity, kindness

Scenario 2

- Eligibility Category: ERI
- 14-year-old female
- Diagnosis of anxiety, depression, and OCD
- Current history of seizures, unknown cause
- Struggles with attention, panic attacks, and perfectionism
- FSIQ: 119
- Strengths: music, kind, friendly, organized

Scenario 3

- Eligibility Category: Autism
- Diagnoses: ASD, Anxiety, Depression, Attention Deficit
- 17-year-old female
- Easily distracted and overwhelmed, with a weakness in visual processing
- Enjoys reading, drawing, and creative writing
- FSIQ 100

Scenario 4

- Eligibility: ERI
- Diagnoses: Bipolar disorder, mood disorder, personality disorder, with a history of trauma
- 15-year-old female
- No FSIQ listed in profile
- Academically capable
- Has difficulty regulating emotions, can be impatient, and shows poor judgment
- Enjoys music, fashion, and makeup
- Motivated by being a model for peers