

Submitter: Kendra Robinson
On Behalf Of: My own kids and the students I teach
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

I have been working in Education since 2004 and have seen a big increase the percentage of students who have extreme behavioral needs. As an example: of the 12 kinders that joined our school this year already identified on an IEP, a majority had intense needs. 1 student's family decided to not have them attend in the end because of their concerns with the students ability to be safe and function in our school setting. 7 of the 11 that come in either already had or would benefit from assistive technology to support their ability to share their needs/wants (Augmentative Communication Device) This is needed because they are non-verbal or their language is near impossible to understand. 4 of these students arrived requiring toileting needs, and nearing the end of the school year, they continue to have these needs. They require 2 or more diaper changes daily. 2 of these students were transitioned to our non-category classroom after the start of the school year. 3 of our students have required a separate one on one setting for part or most of this school year due to the level of aggression and unpredictable behaviors, despite our best attempts to support them. The burnout and stress that these behaviors are causing by not having enough support to meet the needs of these students for teachers and peers is significant. We had 2 staff members, one being new and one being a veteran teacher, both quite by the end of our first month of school due to lack of support and follow through with staffing to support behavioral needs. Roughly 1/3 of one kinder classroom has had students attendance be impacted and parents reporting that their students were experiencing anxiety about coming to school.

The behaviors that would cause a student to be placed in a one on one setting outside of the classroom consists of spitting, biting, hitting, kicking, targeting people, throwing items including chairs, any loose items on walls or counters or in drawers/behind doors and knocking over tables . Also jumping and climbing behaviors including moving items around so that they can climb as high as they can. This has included scaling a 6 foot bookshelf that was secured to a wall and jumping off of it to the beanbag below.

To meet the needs of these students my Special Ed teacher and I have a caseload of 62 students grades k through 6. There are the 2 of us as well as a team of 3 assistants. Keep in mind that I have only shared one grade level and the fact that we have had other students this year that no longer are included in our caseload that consisted of at least one student whose behavior was so unsafe with their body and words telling peers "you should go kill yourself" or "you should die" and pointing his hand like a gun at peers (2nd grader) is now being supported outside of our school. We also had a student that brought a pocket knife and airsoft guns to school that we

needed to support the transition out of our school. There have been the regular move ins and outs.

It is impossible for us to meet these needs with just a team of 5 adults to support this degree of needs. Our priority has been to keep kids safe and to make sure we are meeting toileting and feeding protocols, but the result is that we cannot meet the academic needs of students across our grades and we cannot provide our staff the ability to work with a variety of tasks. The staff working with a majority of our behavioral needs are not highly trained and our temporary sub positions. Our 3 assistants are spending all day with 1on1 situations that are high stress and creating burnout. Staff are actively seeing out new employment and one thing we know about kids with trauma is building those relationships with staff are key to their development and success.

The current state of our classrooms: meeting the academic and behavioral needs of students is not sustainable in the current state. Thank you for listening and working to improve these challenges.