

A Surprisingly High Number of Early Childhood Students Exhibit Troubled Behavior according to Walker Partnerships

In a recent evaluation by Walker Partnerships, integrated metro-west public school classrooms presented self-regulation difficulties by as much as 30 percent

Early Childhood Coordinators in metro west communities report that 25-30 percent of children in their public school integrated classrooms present with self-regulation difficulties. External behaviors reported include: tantrums, fighting with peers, not following an adult's directions, hitting, spitting, and throwing self on the ground. These behaviors can be quite disruptive, requiring adult intervention immediately as they can disrupt classroom learning and become a safety issue.



In addition to these external behaviors, public school administrators also report a high number of equally distressing issues referred to such as worry, anxiety, sadness, becoming easily upset, withdrawing from social situations. Students with these issues have strong feelings but keep them inside instead of expressing them. An example is when a child falls over and hurts him or herself badly, but does not cry or ask for help. In this situation the child will need help from others to express his or her feelings and experiences.

Disruptive behaviors, whether internal or external, significantly reduce learning time for all students. Classrooms with students presenting self-regulation difficulties often require additional adult assistance costing districts money to augment and train staff to manage these students. Teachers and paraprofessionals tend to leave district jobs when the majority of their time is spent managing behaviors and not teaching. Public schools with integrated preschools find it more difficult to fill community slots for typically developing children, as parents do not want their children in the same classroom with explosive children.

Once private preschools and daycare centers see how ineffective it is to merely give these students time-outs or to simply add additional staff to "handle" these situations, they often turn to public school districts, asking them to make observations and to provide strategies. Unfortunately, without the proper staff, skills and programs, districts fall short, resulting in students being terminated from community programs.



Walker Partnerships is available to offer a higher level of assistance. Some of the effective methods Walker Partnerships utilizes include:

- Observing students;
- Working with school staff, this includes modeling to provide them with effective tools;
- Providing clinical support to students and families;
- Providing parent and staff training; and
- Evaluating the school's program, including curriculum, staffing patterns, and the physical environment.

Walker Partnerships provides services for children and families with complex emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges. Walker uses a systems approach with highly trained clinicians and educators who have extensive experience working with public and private schools."

Walker Partnerships recently conducted an early childhood special education program evaluation for the Stoneham, Massachusetts school district. Martha Bakken, Student Services Director explains the process she undertook in selecting Walker Partnerships, "When we were looking for someone to evaluate the preschool program in our district, I asked around for someone who had an expertise in both preschool education and program evaluation, and I was quickly provided with the name of Sally Smith, the Early Childhood Coordinator at Walker Partnerships. We contracted with Walker Partnerships for Sally to evaluate our entire preschool program and she developed a plan that included information and feedback from the multiple constituencies as well as critical data points regarding our program. Sally was responsive to our questions and suggestions and produced an evaluation and report that provided an accurate description of our current strengths and gave us well defined and helpful recommendations for future focus areas."

Judy Norton from the Billerica School System also enlisted the assistance of Walker Partnerships. Here is what she said about the experience, "Sally Smith provided consultation to the Billerica Public School preschool program for the 2014-2105 school year. The focus of her consultation was to support the team in developing a plan to promote meaningful inclusion opportunities for our students with intensive needs. Sally provided guidance and ideas to the team in looking at creative ways to support the inclusion opportunities in terms of scheduling and utilization of all staff. Another important aspect of successful inclusion is the make-up and balance of students in the inclusion setting. Sally put into place a screening process for our in-coming community students to ensure we have all the necessary information on each student to make this happen. Thanks to her assistance, we are starting the 2015-16 school year with a specific inclusion plan and timeline. Teams are currently working at developing their schedules to support the plan, and we are working through the initial screening process so that classes are well balanced, and all student strengths and needs are identified to ensure success for all."

Another program review worth noting was done for the school district of Bedford, Massachusetts. Marianne N. Vines, the district's Director of Special Education describes the review process, "We contracted with Walker Partnerships to assist us in conducting a program review of our preschool programs. Through their evaluation, they assisted us in identifying ways in which we could strengthen our preschool programs. Their clear and practical recommendations guided us to make several changes to processes and procedures that improved our programming significantly. Our school district continues to work to be more inclusive. We contracted with Walker Partnerships to consult with our staff to assist us with the successful inclusion of students with autism at our elementary school. Sally Smith was able to quickly build relationships with the staff and students and offer clear guidance on inclusive practices. Our staff felt very supported by Sally and comfortable approaching her with questions and concerns. Her approach helped the staff to be less anxious and more confident in their knowledge and ability to provide the level of service that these students require."

About Walker Partnerships

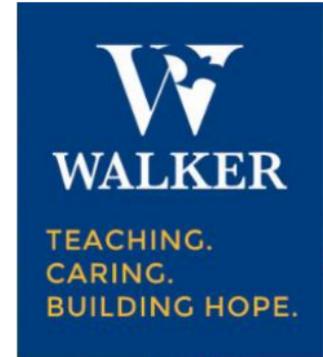
Since 1994 Walker Partnerships has been providing comprehensive services to school districts throughout Massachusetts to help them increase their capacity to include students with serious emotional disabilities. Walker Partnerships' model of service delivery focuses on increasing student participation in general education, reducing barriers, restructuring policies, teaching best practices, and shifting culture. Walker Partnerships is fully committed to finding better ways of including students who are at risk of marginalization or exclusion.

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About Walker

Walker is a nonprofit organization that provides supportive environments for children, teens, and families through an array of academic programs and therapeutic services. Each year, Walker directly serves more than 2,000 children on the Needham and Watertown campuses, impacting an additional 33,000 children and families through trainings and consultation services.

[Learn More](#)



Please contact Walker Partnerships to learn more about the organization and the services it provides to assist school districts in serving their populations of students with social, emotional, behavioral needs.

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