

**Can Training Help Teachers Include Humour to Engage
Adolescents with Challenging Behaviour?**

Gabrielle Marie Mead

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Gabrielle Marie Mead

Diploma of Teaching: Riverina College of Advanced Education, Wagga Wagga

Graduate Diploma Educational Studies: Special Education; Newcastle University, Newcastle

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In loving memory of Steve who loved to laugh, 1954-2011

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Acronyms used in the thesis;

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BD	Behaviour Disorder
CD	Conduct Disorder
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders
ED	Emotionally Disturbed
ESL	English as a Second Language
ODD	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
WBE	Warmth behind the eyes

Abstract

This study investigated the effect of training teachers to include humour in their classrooms and the impact of this humour on school engagement for those students with challenging behaviour. Five teachers from a secondary school in New South Wales participated in the study. The study uses a conceptual framework which incorporates positive educational practices and the promotion of humour through non-verbal communication to manage challenging behaviours. Recent studies in neuroscience validate these assertions with evidence of capacity building in individuals through exposure to humour. The unique ability of humour to divert conflict and reframe concepts is of benefit for this cohort of students. The social benefits of increased social cohesion and removing threat can manifest in relationship building and establishing reciprocity between students and teachers.

The teachers' teaching practices using humour to manage challenging behaviours were observed in four sessions. The teachers were also interviewed about the issues and challenges faced by teachers of these students with challenging behaviours. The data were analysed using a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative procedures.

The results showed that training can change teachers' communication style to include more humour. There was evidence that teachers who reflect on their lesson content and delivery can have a positive effect on students who are disengaged and can subsequently increase connection to school.

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