

Assessment of CT Public School Personnel's Interdisciplinary Practice for Children with ASDs: Development of an Instrument

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Overview

- **Background**
 - Collaborative practices among school personnel
 - ASDs
- **Purpose**
 - Collaboration with CT SDE
 - Research questions
- **Project development**
 - Item development
 - Initial pilot
 - Formal pilot
- **Questions/Comments**

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)

- Includes Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder- Not Otherwise Specified (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)
- Estimated prevalence 1 per 110 individuals (Center for Disease Control, 2009)
- Students with ASDs have needs in multiple domains of functioning
 - Social
 - Communication
 - Functional Behavior

Types of Collaborative Practice

Multidisciplinary



Interdisciplinary



Transdisciplinary





Purpose of Study

- Students with ASDs typically have multiple service providers, so there is need for collaboration
- However, there is limited research about the use of interdisciplinary practice in schools
- CT State Department of Education partnership to develop a survey for public school personnel around interdisciplinary practice for students with ASDs



Survey Research Question 1

To what extents do professionals in schools report collaborating with personnel from other disciplines (i.e., interdisciplinary practice) in support of students with ASDs?

We hypothesize that school professionals' reported use of interdisciplinary practice to support students with ASDs will be low. This finding would be consisted with currently available anecdotal evidence.



Survey Research Question 2

Do school professionals report the desire to collaborate further? What are the barriers to further collaboration?

We hypothesize that school professionals' desire to collaborate further will be high, but that barriers will exist that hinder the desire from becoming a reality.

Survey Research Question 3

To what extent do school professionals rate multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary practices as beneficial or feasible? How does this covary within and across disciplines?

We hypothesize that school professionals will rate the benefit and feasibility of various multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary practices differently across disciplines.



Project Development

- Item development
- Initial pilot
- Formal pilot



Item Development

- Merged two projects on the state of interdisciplinary practice in CT
- 110 items developed
 - Expert review
 - Item analysis
- 20 topic areas identified



Survey Format

- Two sections:
 - Current levels and interest of collaboration
 - Barriers to increased collaboration
- Across 9 areas of practice

Survey: Practices to Support Students with Autism
in CT

Initial Pilot

- Electronic and paper versions shared with school personnel (N = 5)
- Feedback
 - Length
 - Content validity
 - Construct validity
- Revised survey:
 - 7 areas of practice
 - Simplified wording



Formal Pilot

- IRB Approval: April 19th
- Two-pronged approach
 - E-version
 - Interviews
- Revision of survey based on feedback
- Submission of survey to CT State Department of Education

Formal Pilot: Results

- **Electronic Survey Demographics**

- 9 participants (60% response rate).
- Participants included a social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist, school psychologist, speech/language pathologist (2), classroom teacher, and special education teacher (2).
- All participants were white, non-Hispanic and most were female (85%). Their experience, in schools and working with students with disabilities, ranged from 0-5 years to 25+ years.
- Participants held degrees ranging from Bachelors only to Masters plus 60 credits. They worked in schools with students in Preschool to High School in suburban (most) and urban settings and middle socio-economic status.
- Most participants (71%) reported attending professional development 2-4 times per year.

Formal Pilot: Results

- **Electronic Survey**
 - **Clarity and feasibility**
 - Generally feasible and clear.
 - **Overall survey feedback.**
 - Bias in language toward collaboration.
 - Language of introduction.
 - Response choices.
 - **Barriers**
 - Language.
 - Mutually exclusive responses.

Formal Pilot: Results

- **Interviews: Demographics**
 - Interview participants included 6 practitioners working in public schools in CT.
 - Specific demographic information was not collected about these practitioners beyond the disciplines in which they work.
 - A physical therapist (PT), occupational therapist (OT), speech and language pathologist (SLP), a classroom teacher, a special education teacher, and a school psychologist (SP) were interviewed.



Formal Pilot: Results

- **Major Themes:**
 - **Time Constraints.**
 - Instinct response.
 - **Benefits and Feasibility.**
 - Context specific.
 - **Jargon**
 - Responses include too much jargon.

Formal Pilot: Edits

- The suggestions from both the electronic survey responses and interviews were incorporated into a final survey.
- Edits made to the final survey include
 - (a) the rephrasing of statements,
 - (b) clarifying language,
 - (c) making the scenario consistent for each respondent, and
 - (d) changing the response format for some questions to reduce language-based selection bias.



Implications

- This survey will provide an estimate of interdisciplinary practice levels in schools across Connecticut and the levels and types of interdisciplinary training at the pre-service and professional levels.
- These results will serve as useful data for schools, trainers at the pre-service and professional levels, and those interested in promoting interdisciplinary practice.



Implications

- In addition to providing general data, the results will highlight specific areas of success and areas for improvement, including how school-based barriers and demographics moderate the level of interdisciplinary practice that occurs in schools across Connecticut.
- Specifically, this data will highlight the type of school-based interdisciplinary practice utilized, barriers encountered, attitudes about interdisciplinary practice, and the amount and type of training currently available.

Implications

- Systems impact
- Relevance to future careers





Thank you!

Please share your questions and comments.