

Preventing Academic Failure of Children with Disabilities through Parent Workshops

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Abstract

Elementary-aged children with disabilities and their parents attended an 8-week workshop designed to teach parents how to enhance their children's academic skills. The workshops covered a variety of topics, including school-home communication; motivation strategies; effective reading, math, and writing interventions; homework and study skills; monitoring intervention effectiveness in the home; and educational rights of children receiving special education services. The format of these workshops consisted of describing and modeling the strategies for parents and then allowing parents to practice them with their children while receiving feedback from the workshop presenters.

Introduction

- ❖ It is important to establish partnerships between parents and educators (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001)
- ❖ Teaching parents how to tutor their child academically has been rated as an empirically-based practice (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005)
- ❖ Traditionally, however, there is not a formal mechanism established for training parents on tutoring their children in academic areas
- ❖ Previous research provided initial evidence that parents can be effectively taught to intervene with academic skills in the home (Fiala & Sheridan, 2003; Hook & DuPaul, 1999; Valleley, Evans, & Allen, 2002)
- ❖ However, this has often been accomplished on an individual basis
- ❖ The purpose of this project was to improve the capacity of parents to help their children with disabilities in the area of academic achievement
- ❖ This was accomplished by conducting a workshop series to provide resources to a group of parents of children with disabilities

Participants

Project personnel worked in conjunction with local school personnel in two schools in rural Nebraska to assist with recruitment of families with children receiving special education services.

Parent Participants

- ❖ A total of 15 families participated
- ❖ 19 parents participated in the workshops

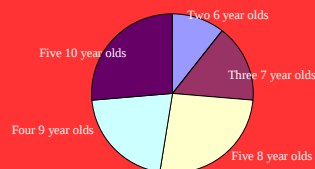
Child Participants

- ❖ 19 children with special education needs participated (10 males, 9 females)
- ❖ 13 participants had one special education verification, 3 children had multiple verifications, and 3 were undetermined
- ❖ Approximately 60% of the child participants attended each week

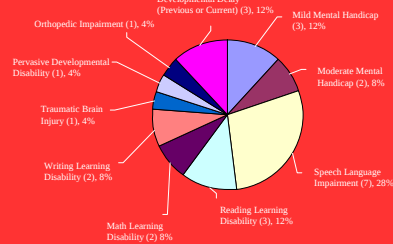
Additional Participants:

- ❖ Several siblings without special education needs also attended
- ❖ 7 professionals attended (Director of Student Services for Plattsmouth, School Psychologists from Plattsmouth and Schuyler, Speech Pathologist, Mental Health Professional, additional school personnel)
- ❖ 15 child care providers (recruited through a grant awarded to the Munroe-Meyer Institute from Americorps)
- ❖ 43 individuals (parents, children with special education needs, school personnel and other community professionals) received direct benefit from the workshops

Child Participants Ages



Child Participants' Special Education Verifications



Workshop Description and Site Locations

- ❖ Two separate 8-week workshops were conducted in rural Nebraska.
- ❖ Workshops consisted of one evening a week for 2 hours each evening.
- ❖ Workshops were conducted in the local school library.

Workshop Format

- ❖ Verbal presentation of topic to parents and school personnel only
- ❖ Live demonstration by workshop educators to parents and school personnel
- ❖ Parent practice with each other
- ❖ Parent practice with child (with feedback from workshop educators)
- ❖ First 3 weeks each child participated in a direct skills assessment in reading, math, and writing to help individualize instructional strategies

Materials Provided

- ❖ Weekly handouts: power point presentation, reproducibles related to topic
- ❖ Flashcards for math/letters/sight words
- ❖ Book for teaching decoding skills
- ❖ CD with reproducibles

Workshop Content

Content area	Content Covered
Overview	• Rapport building • Introduction to workshop format • How children learn: Learning Hierarchy (Acquisition, Fluency, Generalization)
School-Home Communication	• Importance of frequent communication with teachers • How to set up a Daily Behavior Report Card
Motivational Strategies	• Importance of using incentives • Identifying reinforcers - Common systems for giving reinforcers (e.g., grab bags, dot-to-dots, reinforcer menus, magic circle charts)
Progress Monitoring	• Purpose of monitoring progress • How to monitor progress using CBM in - Math - Reading - Written expression • Graphing Progress
Reading	• Stages of learning to read • Specific Instructional Strategies - Folding -in for letters, sounds, sight words - Fluency building strategies (Assisted Reading, Listening Passage Preview, Repeated Readings, Word Error Correction) - Comprehension (questions to ask and character mapping)
Mathematics	• Scope and sequence of math skills • Specific Instructional Strategies - Folding-in - Self-instructional training
Written Expression	• Skills necessary for written expression • Specific Instructional Strategies - How to instruct writing of individual characters - Cover-Copy-Compare - How to develop complete thoughts into written material
Homework, Study, and Test-taking Skills	• How to structure the homework time and environment • Test preparation
Parental Special Education Rights	• Educate parents regarding their rights in the Special Education Process • Get parents thinking about what they can contribute with the process

Discussion

What you need to get this done

- ❖ Presenters: Minimum of two
- ❖ Child care staff
- ❖ Direct skills assessors: A minimum of three
- ❖ School personnel: School Psychologists, Director of Student Services
- ❖ Coordinator of materials and families

Lessons Learned

- ❖ School environment good place to conduct workshops
- ❖ Coordination with school personnel
- ❖ "Personal Invitations" from trusted school personnel
- ❖ Use of volunteers for childcare: potential but need coordination and organized activities
- ❖ Logistics: snacks, reinforcers, activities, access to copy machines, etc.

References

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