



# PARENT-TEACHER CONSULTATION IN AUTISM: MOVING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

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## Background

- The epidemic rise in the number of identified children with autism represents an urgent public health issue.
- About 1/150 children have an ASD.
- Although the focus on early identification efforts in recent years has been effective in sharply increasing the number of children receiving services in schools, those services are of uneven quality.
- There is a critical need to improve receipt of high quality early intervention services that are equally available regardless of family income, race, or geographic location
- A consultation intervention - the Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success (COMPASS) was evaluated.

## Objectives

- To evaluate the impact of a conjoint parent-teacher consultation intervention COMPASS vs. "usual" educational program development practice.
- To identify active ingredients of the intervention.

## Methods

- A single blind randomized controlled design was applied.
- A evaluator unaware of group assignment used curriculum based assessment of goal attainment scaling (CBGAS) to evaluate child outcomes at Time 2.
- To establish proof of concept, putative mechanisms of change also were analyzed, i.e., quality of the educational plans and teacher adherence to coaching.
- Thirty-five teachers and a randomly selected student with autism ( $M_{age} = 6.1$  years) from each teacher's classroom participated.

## Methods, cont.

- A total of 18 teachers to the experimental condition (Table 1).
- Experimental condition:
  - Half-day collaborative consultation with caregiver (2.5 – 3 hours) at start of school year.
  - Three skills were prioritized (based on best practice recommendations from the National Research Council (2001) and parent/teacher concern) and specific teaching plans were generated.
  - Following consultation, teachers received four 1.5 hour teacher-coaching sessions.
- An evaluator unaware of group assignment conducted post assessment (Fig 1).
- Parent / teacher satisfaction was collected.

Table 1. Between Group Comparison of Child & Teacher Characteristics at Time 1

Characteristics*	M (SD)			
	Control	Experimental	t	p
<b>Child</b>				
Age	6.09 (1.4)	6.21 (1.8)	-.22	.782
Childhood Autism Rating Scale	41.34 (7.7)	37.34 (9.2)	1.38	.18
Differential Abilities Scale <sup>1</sup>	39.82 (19.5)	52.92 (28.9)	-1.54	.13
Oral and Written Language Scales <sup>1</sup>	45.72 (8.3)	52.00 (17.6)	-1.31	.20
Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (TR) <sup>2</sup>	61.60 (8.3)	65.11 (17.1)	-.75	.46
<b>Teacher</b>				
Teacher Total Number of Children Taught	13.57 (12.5)	5.41 (5.8)	2.41**	.03
Teacher Total Years with Children with Autism	11.44 (10.4)	4.77 (3.8)	2.44**	.03

Note: TR = Teacher Report; Standard Score; <sup>1</sup>t-score; <sup>2</sup>sampling weights were applied in the pilot to adjust for differences in sampling probabilities due to oversampling of African American children. \*\*t test with equal variances not assumed.

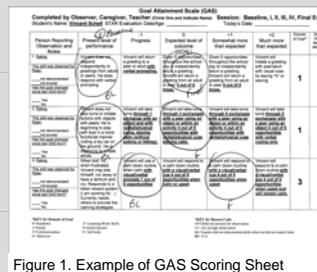


Figure 1. Example of GAS Scoring Sheet

## Results

- Parent / teacher satisfaction was high (Mean 3.7 out of 4).
- After controlling for pretest (CBGAS) scores ( $M_{pre} = 31.38$ ), there was a statistically significant group difference in change from pretest to posttest scores,  $F(1, 29) = 11.08$ ,  $p = .002$ , indicating greater improvement in scores for children in the experimental group ( $M_{adjusted} = 60.87$ ) relative to the control group ( $M_{adjusted} = 46.63$ ) (Fig 2).
- Only treatment fidelity at coaching session four correlated with child outcomes ( $r = .59$ ,  $p = .006$ ).
- IEP quality correlated with child outcomes for the experimental but not control group ( $p = .01$ ).

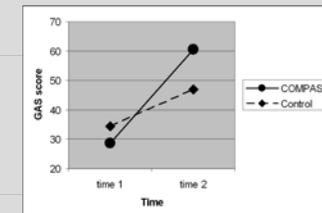


Figure 2. Two-way ANOVA for Time and Group Conditions

Table 2. Means & Standard Deviations of GAS Scores for the COMPASS and Control Groups by Time

Testing Time	COMPASS Group GAS		Control Group GAS		F	p	Effect
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
1 (0 months)	27.49 (5.3)	36.37 (8.3)	11.42	.002			
2 (8 months)	60.86 (10.7)	46.36 (12.6)	10.50	.003			
	62.18*	44.72*	10.40	.004	1.51		

\*Adjusted means from ANCOVA on the pilot data

## Discussion

- Preliminary evidence suggests consultation can be effective for improving child outcomes.
- Replication of study findings are necessary.

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