



Research Week 2020

Effect of the Communication Matrix Community of Practice on Students' Expressive Communication Skills

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Keywords

Developmental Disability, Intervention, Communication Development, Rehabilitation

Abstract

Background

Developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) for children with severe disabilities is challenging because many educational practitioners lack the background knowledge and skills to assess the communication needs of students and develop appropriate communication-related goals and objectives. One promising method for increasing educational professionals' knowledge and skills are communities of practice, which provide web-based learning and professional development opportunities. The purpose of this study was to examine whether using the online Communication Matrix Suite of tools (training webinar, assessment, custom report, and community) would result in higher quality expressive communication goals and significant growth in expressive communication skills.

Method

A quasi-experimental, one-group pre-test post-test design was used to examine the effects of the Communication Matrix Suite intervention. We examined changes in pre and post intervention measures of expressive communication using the Communication Matrix and IEP quality. 102 professional-student pairs were included in the study. The Communication Matrix Suite included a set of four online tools designed to support educational professionals in assessing the expressive communication skills of and selecting appropriate educational goals for students with complex communication needs.

Results

One-way repeated measures ANOVA were conducted to compare scores on the Communication Matrix Assessment pre and post-intervention and to compare the quality of IEP goals. Scores on the Communication Matrix Assessment were significantly higher following the intervention. There was no significant difference in IEP/IFSP quality.

Discussion

Comparison of the Communication Matrix Assessment scores of the students before and after their teachers and speech-language pathologists participated in the study indicated significant increases in expressive communication skills, but no difference in IFSP/IEP quality. Results provide initial evidence of the promise of the Communication Matrix Suite for increasing students' expressive communication skills.

