2-4-2011

Puppets in Education

Mena Bakhit
Jessica Clem
Mayo Fujii
Meghan Garcia-Webb
Taylor Lincoln

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.uvm.edu/comphp_gallery

Part of the Community Health and Preventive Medicine Commons, and the Health Services Research Commons

Recommended Citation

Bakhit, Mena; Clem, Jessica; Fujii, Mayo; Garcia-Webb, Meghan; Lincoln, Taylor; Nesbit, Ariana; Schwartz, Amanda; Vakhshoorzadeh, Peymaun; Lyons, Deb; and Contompasis, Steve, "Puppets in Education" (2011). Public Health Projects, 2008-present. Book 60.
http://scholarworks.uvm.edu/comphp_gallery/60

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Public Health Projects, University of Vermont College of Medicine at ScholarWorks @ UVM. It has been accepted for inclusion in Public Health Projects, 2008-present by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UVM. For more information, please contact donna.omalley@uvm.edu.
Authors
Mena Bakhit, Jessica Clem, Mayo Fujii, Meghan Garcia-Webb, Taylor Lincoln, Ariana Nesbit, Amanda Schwartz, Peymaun Vakhshoorzadeh, Deb Lyons, and Steve Contompasis

This article is available at ScholarWorks @ UVM: http://scholarworks.uvm.edu/comhp_gallery/60
Puppets in Education

Bakhit, M.1, Clem, J.1, Fujii, M.1, Garcia-Webb, M.1, Lincoln, T.1, Nesbit, A.1, Schwartz, A.1, Vakhshoorzadeh, J.1, Lyons, D.2, Contompasis, S.1

1University of Vermont College of Medicine, Burlington, VT; 2Puppets In Education, Burlington, VT

Introduction

• Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a group of related brain-based disorders that affect a child’s behavior, social and communication skills.
• In 2009, approximately 1,000 Vermont students received special educational services for ASD.
• Puppets in Education (PiE) is a non-profit group that teaches kids how to keep themselves safe and healthy and to appreciate each other’s differences.
• PiE’s Friend 2 Friend Program (F2F) addresses ASD in fun and interactive puppet and workshop presentations, promoting empathy for individuals on the autism spectrum by modeling, labeling, explaining and normalizing differences, and teaching prosocial communication and friendship skills.
• Last year, UVM COM students collaborated with PiE to determine how the use of puppets could best educate the community regarding ASD.
• This year’s goals were to elicit:
  • the perceived effectiveness of current ASD education in the classroom;
  • the perceived effectiveness of including children with ASD in the classroom; and
  • the most important aspects of ASD to address in the Puppets in Education (PiE) curriculum

Objectives

To conduct a survey to assess the effectiveness of current curriculum approaches to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) education and to assess the educational impact of including students with Autism in the classroom.

Methods

A survey was emailed out to a total of 1,420 VT educators and 5,671 community members on 10/10/10, creating a total survey population of 7,091 individuals from all counties across the state of Vermont.

Population surveyed:
1) Families with a child with ASD (ages 2 to adult)
2) Families without a child with ASD
3) Educational professionals that teach students with ASD

Data Analysis

• Quantitative data was analyzed using Chi2 distribution and multinomial logistical regression where appropriate. Qualitative data (responses to open-ended survey questions) were evaluated using a simplified qualitative data analysis technique and included the reporting of trends.

Survey Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Skills Curriculum</th>
<th>Puppets in Education Program</th>
<th>Neither a Social Skills Curriculum nor a Puppets in Education Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Puppets in Education [PiE] is an innovative/effective approach to delivering content; entertaining and inspiring to both children and adults.”

Further Study Recommendations

1. Survey the children who participate in PiE’s Friend 2 Friend programs to document their understanding of ASD and their behavioral response to peers on the autism spectrum.
2. Find a way to target more parents of children with and without autism to gather further information from their perspectives.
3. Write survey questions that fit more clearly into a formal matrix for qualitative data analysis.

Results

• Divisions were noted across all sampled populations on the topic of inclusion. Educational professionals discussed difficulties of knowing when and how to implement inclusive practices.
• While more educators than families felt the current approach to inclusion (students with differences/disabilities) was effective, all sample populations expressed a desire for more information and education on how to implement it effectively.
• While curricula for inclusion within the schools exist, parents of children with ASD feel that they are the main source of information on the disorder.
• There is a further need for ASD and social skills education.
• Issues with confidentiality were cited as a potential barrier to further curricula development.
• Educators felt more confident about their school’s ability to balance the needs of children with ASD and their peers than families.
• Families with ASD felt more confident than families without ASD addressing the topic of autism spectrum disorders with their child’s school.
• Families with ASD felt more confident addressing the topic of autism spectrum disorders than educators did addresses the topic with parents of typically developing peers.
• Educators who teach children with ASD felt more confident addressing ASD with parents.
• Families who felt that their school effectively included children with differences/disabilities were more likely to be confident in their school’s ability to balance the needs of children with and without ASD.
• As each child with ASD is different, families need flexibility in structured support systems improve classroom behaviors for children with ASD.
• Families and professionals can share in the challenges and successes in educating children with ASD.

Discussion

Universally, parents and educators felt that more education was necessary to effectively work with students with ASD.

• There are curriculums currently available that teachers can adopt.
• Including works by Michelle Garcia Winner.

There is no “One-Size Fits All” approach to working with a student with ASD.

• Teachers and Parents need to work together to not inadvertently “out” a student with disability when presenting social skills programs.

Families are the main source of information on Autism Spectrum Disorder in their schools.

• Effective communication between families and their teachers can help bridge the gap, and families should be involved in educating their teachers about the needs of their specific child.

There is no “One-Size Fits All” approach to working with a student on the spectrum.

• Each student is different, programs need to be flexible and individualized to fit the specific needs of each child on the spectrum.