



THE EFFECTS OF SENSORY-BASED PARAPROFESSIONAL AND TEACHER TRAINING

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DCE SITE DESCRIPTION

- VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES (VES)** is a unique non-profit service provider that serves individuals and families with intellectual and developmental disorders throughout the lifespan
- Mission Statement: "To provide love, care, and hope for children, adults, and seniors with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. We create a transformative environment to empower neurodivergent individuals to reach their fullest potential and lead fulfilling lives" (VES, 2022)



SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Establishment of student transitional curriculum from Villa Esperanza School
- Improve standards of practice to support students within the classroom
- Development of curriculum for onboard paraprofessional training

LITERATURE REVIEW

COMMON THEMES

- Studies stress the need for defined job descriptions/roles, training, and supervision for paraprofessionals in special education (Mason et al., 2021; Zobell & Hwang, 2020)
- Specialized sensory-based training and professional development for paraprofessionals can improve student performance (Brock et al., 2021; Stockall, 2014; Quinn et al., 2022; Wild & Steeley, 2018)

LITERATURE GAPS

- Limited research on sensory-based training, small sample sizes, and challenges of isolating variables urging further research in education

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop a sensory-based paraprofessional and teacher training program
- Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the program
- Develop advanced practice skills in school-based pediatrics

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE Enhance paraprofessional and teacher knowledge of sensory integration and processing disorders, providing practical strategies for supporting students with special needs in school settings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

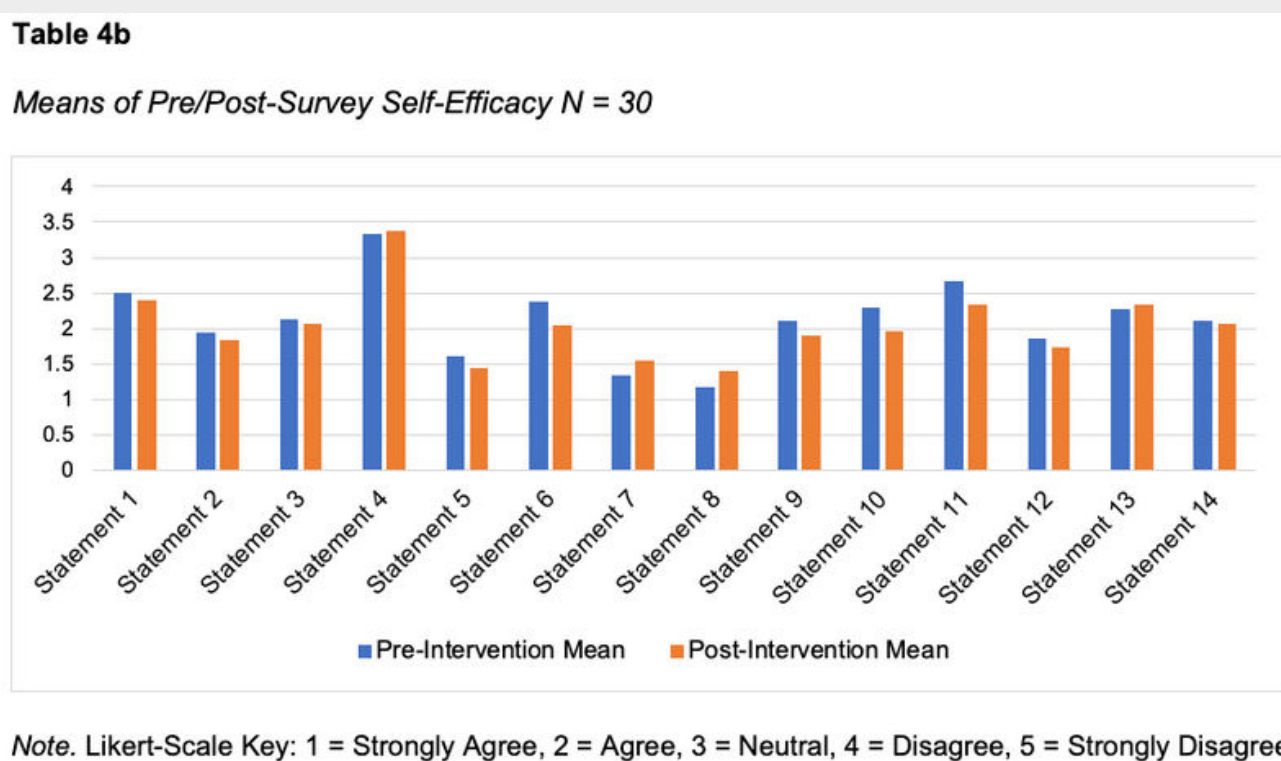
- Sensory Program Development and Implementation
- Program Evaluation
- Advanced Clinical Practice Skills

PROGRAM STRUCTURE Participants completed a pre/post-survey, a five-hour sensory training, including topics on "Sensory Fundamentals," "Sensory Equipment Lab," "Carrying Out Sensory Diets," and "Classroom Collaboration Meetings" and post-intervention interviews

PARTICIPANTS 30 participants (23 paraprofessionals, three lead paraprofessionals, and four teachers) employed at Villa Esperanza School for the 2023-2024 academic year

PROJECT OUTCOMES

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS



Statistically Significant Improvements:

- Perceived Sensory Diet Effectiveness (6)
- Knowledge of Seven or More Sensory Strategies (11)

Approaching Statistical Significance:

- Using Sensory Strategies as Initial Response(10)

Positive Changes Post-Intervention:

- Sensory Knowledge Self-Efficacy (1)
- Understanding Student-Specific Sensory Needs (2)
- Sensory Diet Adherence (3)

Mixed results were observed in other areas, suggesting room for further program refinement.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Reintroduction of Sensory Fundamentals

"It was a lot of good information... Because of everything we have to do it's easy to forget. A lot of the information you gave brought it back to the forefront of my mind."

Improved Decision-Making and Rationale Due to Resource Accessibility

"It [sensory information and diets] gives me more strength when I'm telling them [the instructional aides] the reasons for why these students need that. Things are a lot easier with the information and what you gave us."

Need for Further Training in Sensory-Based Information

"I didn't know how to do that [specific sensory interventions] before... I have the confidence to be able to use them [the sensory tools] and would like more [opportunities] to learn more."

DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

ALIGNING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

- Significant improvement in participants' perception of sensory diet effectiveness corresponded with qualitative themes emphasizing the reintroduction of sensory fundamentals
- Qualitative findings highlighted the positive influence of resource accessibility on decision-making processes, reinforcing the practical significance of intervention components aimed at enhancing resource accessibility

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE INTERVENTION:

- Integration of quantitative and qualitative data offers a comprehensive understanding of intervention effectiveness and implications.
- Findings suggest areas for improvement, such as refining intervention strategies and providing ongoing training to address sensory needs effectively.

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REFERENCES