



# 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

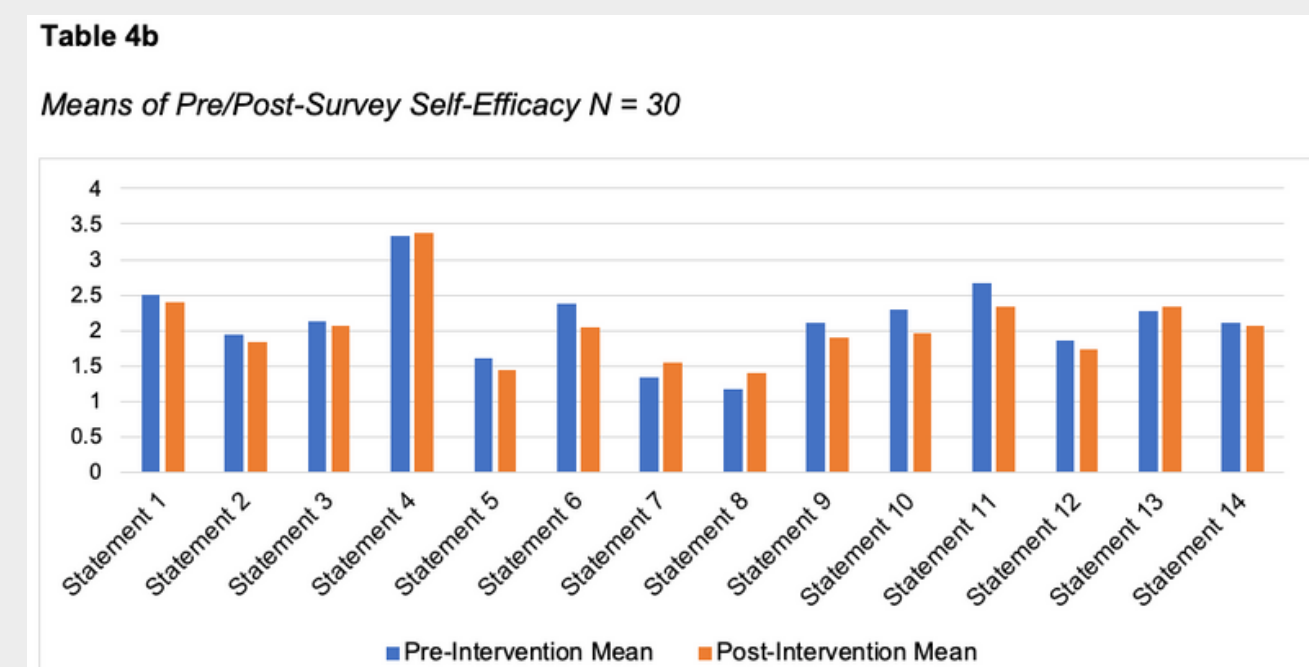
- Sensory Program Development and Implementation
- Program Evaluation
- Advanced Clinical Practice Skills

**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



Note. Likert-Scale Key: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree.

### 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.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## DELIVERABLE PRODUCTS



SCHOLARLY DELIVERABLES



EVALUATION DELIVERABLES



REFERENCES