



# RESEARCH RUNDOWN

## Social Validity of Applied Behaviour Analysis Intervention in a School Setting

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We obtained satisfaction survey responses from school staff who worked with 19 children with autism spectrum disorder. The children received applied behaviour analysis services from St.Amant between 2009 and 2015. We found that service duration and location did not affect staff satisfaction, nor did student challenging behaviour. School staff appreciated the variety of behavioural strategies available to them. They often found it challenging to meet and coordinate with St.Amant staff.

### What is this research about?

St.Amant provides a school-based, government-funded service for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Autism Consultants provide behavioural strategies for school staff to deliver in the classroom. How satisfied are staff with the service?

### What did the researchers do?

We obtained satisfaction survey responses from school staff who worked with 19 children with ASD. The children received applied behaviour analysis (ABA) services from St.Amant between 2009 and 2015. The staff included classroom teachers, resource teachers, and educational assistants.

We tried to answer several questions using the survey data. First, were staff satisfaction ratings influenced by the location of service (city versus rural)? Were ratings affected by the number of years of service the child received from St.Amant? Were ratings affected by whether a student engaged in challenging behaviours? (Challenging behaviours can negatively impact learning and social opportunities.) Finally, what types of challenges did staff face when using behavioural strategies in schools?

### What did the researchers find?

We found that service duration, location, and challenging behaviours did not affect staff ratings.

We reviewed open-ended survey questions to learn staff views on using behavioural strategies.

### What you need to know:

School staff who delivered ABA intervention to children with ASD valued the procedures used. But they also identified challenges in coordinating their availability with the School-Age Learning Program staff.

One question was, *"Please comment on the aspects of the School-Age Learning Program that you find the most helpful"*. Four themes emerged among 53 responses:

- 1) *ABA Techniques and Strategies* (e.g., appreciation of the variety of strategies used)
- 2) *Communication* (e.g., the ease of communication between school personnel and St.Amant staff)
- 3) *Support* (e.g., supportive staff)
- 4) *Staff* (for example, other staff were very helpful)

Staff mentioned *ABA Techniques and Strategies* most often. They mentioned *Staff* least often.



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Another question was, “Please provide suggestions as to how the School-Age Learning Program could be enhanced or strengthened to better meet your needs”. Eight themes emerged among the 29 responses:

- 1) *Meeting* (e.g., conflicting availability of school staff to meet with School-Age Learning Program staff)
- 2) *Education* (e.g., wanting additional training and professional development opportunities)
- 3) *Documentation* (e.g., difficulty reading documents due to the third part of tri-copies not being legible)
- 4) *Communication* (e.g., wanting more information regarding goals targeted in home setting)
- 5) *Staff Turnover* (e.g., experiencing changes in team members during the school year)
- 6) *Number of Recommendations* (e.g., feeling overwhelmed due to too many goals at the same time)
- 7) *General Satisfaction* (e.g., general expression of satisfaction with the program)
- 8) *Values and Beliefs* (e.g., misalignment between ABA approach and school-based values and beliefs)

Staff mentioned *Meeting and Education* most often. They mentioned *Values and Beliefs* least often.

## Why is it important?

This study addressed important knowledge gaps. There is not enough research on how well ABA is accepted in schools. We also need to know more about how easily school staff can deliver behavioural intervention. What are they challenges that they face, and how should we change practices to help them? Answering these questions may increase the acceptance of behaviour interventions. It may also improve working relationships between different groups who serve children with ASD.

## Research Team

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## Additional Resources

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Project completed 2017.

Please see: <http://stamant.ca/research/our-research/project-summaries/> for more project summaries.