



# RESEARCH RUNDOWN

## Meeting the Knowledge Needs of Special Education Teachers

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We asked special education teachers working with students with intellectual/developmental disabilities what information they need to do their job better. We found out teachers wanted help dealing with students who display challenging behaviours. Our team found evidence-based ways to manage problem behaviours and then translated the information into easy to understand resources to use in their classrooms. We are sharing the resources and the process we developed to help other teachers and paraprofessionals.

### What is this research about?

Children and young adults with developmental disabilities sometimes engage in challenging behaviours that present serious risks to themselves and others. Classroom teachers and other service providers need up-to-date and unbiased research findings about effective approaches to these behaviours, but often this information is neither easily accessible nor user-friendly.

We assembled a research team consisting of classroom teachers, established researchers, and researchers in training to find and summarize the relevant literature and put together a package of practical information for teachers that will ultimately improve the well-being of students.

### What did the researchers do?

Researchers and teachers partnered to develop and evaluate a process to translate sound scientific knowledge – that is, to make the information user-friendly, easily accessible, and available to teachers and related professionals.

Through this knowledge translation and exchange process, we received requests for information about treating severe challenging behaviours, conducted systematic reviews of research findings, are preparing evidence-based practice recommendations (see <http://katydid.info/links/>), and are sharing those recommendations to promote uptake. We evaluated every step of the process, using mixed methods, to improve the process based on the results.

### What you need to know:

Special Education Teachers working with students with intellectual/developmental disabilities need user-friendly, evidence-based ways to manage challenging behaviours in their classrooms. In response, we formed a team of researchers and special education teachers to translate research findings into practical strategies for teachers to ultimately improve the lives of persons living with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Four working groups were each tasked with finding answers to four key questions:

- What specific research-supported strategies can be used to manage challenging behaviours of students with intellectual/developmental disabilities?
- What are some common medications received by students with special needs, and how do they typically affect behaviour?
- What knowledge, skills, and attitudes must staff learn so that they can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour among students with intellectual/developmental disabilities?



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- How can we more easily identify enjoyable activities for students with profound disabilities?

A fifth Working Group evaluated the knowledge translation and exchange process and satisfaction of the project and Working Group deliverables.

## What did the researchers find?

A large scale knowledge translation and exchange project takes a great deal of time, however, research team members were highly satisfied with the knowledge translation and exchange process, and knowledge users were satisfied with the knowledge needs assessment process and products that were developed. Thus, efforts to translate evidence-based knowledge into usable products were successful.

Overall, the project demonstrates that researchers, in collaboration with special education teachers working with students with developmental disabilities can implement a formal knowledge translation and exchange process.

Answers to the four key questions are available at <http://stamant.ca/research/school-kt-project/>.

## Why is it important?

Our findings will impact positively on well-being, educational practice, and program policy, to the benefit of students, teachers, families and administrators. The systematic reviews yield evidence-based techniques for reducing challenging/dangerous behaviours of students with developmental disabilities, and will directly improve their health, reduce stress, and improve their overall life quality. The knowledge will inform schools/administrators in policy decisions on managing challenging behaviours of students with developmental disabilities. The knowledge translation process may be transferrable to other areas and for other professionals.

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## Additional Resources

For an Up-Goer Five version of the abstract visit: <http://bit.ly/ICPdqv>

For more information about the School Knowledge Translation Project email: [research@stamant.ca](mailto:research@stamant.ca)

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Project completed 2014. Please see: <http://stamant.ca/research/our-research/project-summaries/> for more project summaries.