

PDIG Final Report

Project Description:

The *'Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies at Saint Paul Elementary School'* PDIG turned out to be a great success. It proved to be an effective model in moving staff forward in regards to improving their teaching practices, working with students on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The PDIG was very closely carried out as planned. Many of the ideas that were brought up in a similar PDIG last year on how we could look at improving the experience were applied to this year's PDIG. These improvements included working with different members of the schools teams, including Attendants, as well as taking place at the team's school in order to provide many opportunities for hands on learning. As the PDIG took place at the school, I was able to model the strategies that were being discussed and give the team members many opportunities to practice and receive constructive feedback. This led to an effective way of bridging theory and practice.

In our four days together, we covered a lot of material and team members had the chance to practice the strategies covered, with their students. The model for our days usually consisted of theory in the morning and practice (modeling and then a chance to practice on their own) in the afternoon. Some of the content covered included: reinforcement, punishment, extinction, motivation, stimulus control, functions of behaviour, A-B-C's of behaviour, motivation, antecedent based interventions, prompting/prompt fading, modeling, task analysis, chaining, shaping, errorless teaching, token economies and effective ways of increasing communication.

Project Goals:

The goal of this project was for participants to further their knowledge and application concerning evidence-based practices for students on the Autism Spectrum. Furthermore, the initiative was for the participants to feel comfortable sharing their newly acquired knowledge and skills to other members of their school. Ultimately, the global objective was to improve student success and delivery of quality educational services.

The goals of this project were met, as I was able to observe the team members apply their newly acquired knowledge with their students. Additionally, they felt that the workshops were so informative and important that they began to discuss some of the basics of what they learned with other members of their school team. Further interest began to form around the rest of the school and they requested for me to come back on a PED day to work with around 25 other staff members (a combination of teachers, special education technicians and attendants), where I reviewed some of the evidence-based practices that we discussed throughout the PDIG.

Project Outcomes:

The gains that the participating team members achieved through this project were greater insight revolving around evidence-based practices for students with an ASD. This was measured through their application of their newly found knowledge, resulting in a decrease of challenging behaviours in their students, as well as an increase in desired skills.

Reinvestment:

As mentioned in the previous section, the learning achieved by the team members has resulted in greater success for their students. There has also been an initiative within the school to adopt evidence-based practices for students with ASD.

This model of professional development has been very successful, which I feel in large part had to do with the opportunity for the participants to apply the theoretical concepts that we were speaking about in the moment and have them modeled in real time. I would highly recommend that other teams carry out this project. I would encourage others to incorporate a mix of teachers and support staff (even if only for part of the sessions).