Research Validation for STAR and Links

STAR Program Research Validation

The Autism Outcome Study: Enrolled over 122 children in public pre-school and school-age programs over a five year period. These programs included rural, suburban and urban schools. The project staff provided training in the STAR Program and a separate team of researchers conducted assessments of the students to monitor their progress. The students made significant progress in all areas of instruction. In particular, students made significant progress in the areas of expressive language, receptive language, social interaction skills, academics and independence on functional routines. (Arick, Young, Falco, Loos, Krug, Gense, & Johnson, 2003; Arick, Young, Falco, Loos, Krug, Gense and Johnson, 2004). Ninety-one percent of the students made progress in the expressive language area. The project has continued to evaluate student progress and has found consistent results as those obtained in the initial Autism Outcome Study (Arick, Willis, Nakada, 2011).

The Autism Instructional Methods Study (AIMS): The AIMS project was a comprehensive study of effective educational practices in a large urban school district. The STAR Program, and training in the curriculum, composed the core elements for a three-year study involving thirty-four K-3 classrooms for students with autism. This study was a randomized control trial funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). The study was conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Autism Research and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Students in the STAR Program showed significantly greater gains than the experimental group when program fidelity was obtained (Mandell, 2010, 2011).

Measuring Outcome an Early Intervention Program for Toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Results of this study found that students who were provided early intervention using the STAR Program made significant progress over a two year period of time. The study also found that the STAR Student Learning Profile correlated highly with other standardized measures and provided additional useful information about student skills learned (Bacon, Dufek, Schreibman, Stahmer, Pierce and Courchesne, 2014).

The STAR Program is research-validated by multiple independent randomized control trials (including IES and NIH Grants).

Links Curriculum Research Validation

A major field test was conducted in the state of Oregon during 1999-2000 to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement system that is utilized in the Links Curriculum. Thirty school districts, 133 instructors, and 478 students with moderate to severe disabilities participated in the study (Arick, Nave, & Hoffman, 2000). Extensive reliability and validity studies were conducted. Test-retest and inter-observer reliability were found to be high. Assessment validity correlated with the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales. It was found to measure independence levels in students with significant disabilities including students with autism. Further information can be found in the implementation guide.

A study was implemented by a group of instructors residing in several areas of the U.S. A pre-post single subject design was utilized. At the conclusion of the study, an analysis of the pre-post results was conducted. Data from the study indicated that 90% of the students improved across all routines selected. This indicates that 90% of the students made progress on their selected routines. Further information on this study can be found in the implementation guide.

Evidence-based Practices as Suggested by the National Professional Development Center and National Standard Project

	STAR	LINKS
Comprehensive Behavioral Treatment	X	X
Discrete Trial Training	X	X
Antecedent Package (ABA, positive behavior supports, token systems, FBA)	X	X
Behavioral Package (ABA, positive behavior supports, token systems, FBA)	X	X
Pivotal Response Training	X	N/A
Schedules	X	X
Self-management (promoting independence)	X	X
Task Analysis	X	X
Joint Attention Training	X	X
Modeling and Imitation	X	X
Naturalistic Teaching Strategies	X	X
Functional Communication	X	X
Social Skills Training	X	X
Visual and Environmental Supports	X	X
Reinforcement	X	X
Independent Work Systems	X	X
Prompting Strategies	X	X
Computer Aided Instruction	N/A	

References

National Autism Center (2015). National Standards Project findings and conclusions: Addressing the need for evidence-based practice guidelines for Autism Spectrum Disorders. Randolph, MA: National Autism Center.

Wong, C., Odom, S.l., Hume, K., Cox, A.W., Fettig A., Kucharczyk, S., Schultz, T.R. (2013) Evidence-based practices for children, youth and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Autism Evidence-Based Practice Review Group.