

ABSTRACT

González, José I., *Texas Public School District Special Education Administrators' Level of Knowledge of the Characteristics of Children with Autism and Corresponding Implementation of Research-Based Teaching Methodologies*. Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), August, 2008, 90 pp., 8 tables, 66 references.

In recent years the reported prevalence of children with autism has increased dramatically. Schools are in search of professionals who possess knowledge of the characteristics of children with autism and who also have knowledge of instructional strategies that target the major deficits associated with autism: communication skills, social interaction skills, and behavioral excesses and deficits.

The first goal of this study was to measure public school district special education administrator knowledge levels of the characteristics of children with autism. Data indicated a moderate to high level of knowledge from administrators, according to the researcher-developed survey. None of the public school district special education administrators exhibited low levels of knowledge; therefore, respondents were divided into two groups: administrators with the highest levels of knowledge and administrators with the lowest levels of knowledge relative to the findings. The second goal of this study was to identify the research-based teaching methodologies implemented in the school districts of these two groups. The data describes methodologies used to improve verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and behavior in children with autism according to the two previously identified groups.

The writer believes that this investigation contributes knowledge in the area of public school district special education administration by illuminating the knowledge base of characteristics and services provided to children with autism. Further, the researcher believes the study provides a platform for future studies in an area where few studies exist.