

Impacts of Classroom Setting on Social Communication in Preschool Children with Autism

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Research Question: After intervention, is there a difference in social skills for those children in inclusion versus self-contained classrooms?

Background:

- Social functioning is one of most prevalent diagnostic features for ASD
- IDEA-Least Restrictive Environment-push for more children to be in inclusion classrooms¹

Methods:

- Secondary analysis of data from the ASAP project
 - Variables: Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale (ADOS)², Mullen Scales of Early Learning (Cognition), Professional Development in Autism Program Assessment (PDA)
 - Covariates: age, cognition level, social scores from pretest
 - Pearson product-moment correlation computed for continuous variables to control for confounding variables
 - ANCOVA-effects of classroom type on children's social communication skills

Results:

Descriptive Data

- Significant relationship between child's social skills at TP1, cognition, and social score TP3 (after intervention)

	1.	2.	3.
1. ADOS Social Pretest	1	.471**	.743**
2. Mullen Score	.471**	1	.371**
3. ADOS Social Time 3	.743**	.371**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Inferential Statistics

- Classroom quality did not significantly contribute to differences in social communication scores

	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Inclusion vs. Self-Contained)	1.97	.163

- Total communication score at TP1 is the only significant predictor for social communication score at TP3(F=117.48; p=.000)

Participant Demographics and Classroom Setting (n=161)

Characteristic	n (%)
Gender	
Female	22 (13.7)
Male	139 (86.3)
Classroom Type	
Inclusion	51 (31.7)
Self-Contained	109 (67.7)

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

- No statistically significant differences in social skills for those in self-contained versus inclusion classrooms
- Implication for policy: less about classroom setting and more about early intervention
- As an OT, helping to determine other factors contributing to increase of child's social skills: **age** at intervention, **types of intervention**, other considerations in the **environment**

Resources

1. Kauffman, J.M. & Hallahan, D.P. (2011) Least Restrictive Environment. In M. Rozalski, J. Miller, & A. Stewart (Ed.), *Handbook of Special Education* (pp. 107-119). New York: Routledge.
2. Lord, C., Risi, S., Lambrecht, L., Cook, E., Leventhal, B., DiLavore, P., Pickles, A., & Rutter, M. (1999). The autism diagnostic observation schedule-generic: A standard measure of social and communication deficits associated with the spectrum of autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 30(3), 205-223.

